

THE
BEST
OF

DRAW!



VOLUME
ONE



STEP-BY-STEP LESSONS & INTERVIEWS BY TOP PROS IN COMICS, CARTOONING, & ANIMATION!

THE BEST OF *DRAW!*

VOLUME ONE

Edited and designed by Mike Manley
Front and back cover illustrations by Bret Blevins
Proofreading by Eric Nolen-Weathington and John Morrow



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Dedication

This collection is dedicated to my grandmother, Mignon Cole whose love, encouragement, and big box of paper and pencils helped pave the way for the success I enjoy today.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Genndy Tartakovsky, Dave Gibbons, Jerry Ordway, Ricardo Villagran, Klaus Janson, Ande Parks, Phil Hester, and Steve Conley for taking their time and sharing with us their knowledge and love of comics, and to thank my family, friends as well as the many, many regular readers of *DRAW!* who have given me nothing but universally positive feedback on *DRAW!* since day one.

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BONUS FULL-COLOR SECTIONS!

Featuring Bret Belvins' life drawings (page 49) and designs from Samurai Jack (page 145)!

FOREWORD

My pal Mike Manley first suggested the idea of creating a book or magazine explaining the fundamentals and intricacies of our craft over 15 years ago, though as he mentions in his introduction that dream had been alive in his mind since childhood. The desire to share information and help others is one of the many generous qualities of Mike, and his numerous and amazingly versatile talents lift him into a vantage point of a rare encompassing perspective on our complex and difficult art form.

Mike is an eternal student, and his enthusiasms for all forms of art have opened the pages of his magazine to a kaleidoscope of talent in many fields—the only criteria for exclusion is poor quality, which brings us to the heart of his accomplishment. *DRAW!* is without a doubt the most practical how-to magazine that has ever been done for the serious student of narrative cartooning and illustration. Mike's insistence on quality elevates this material into a rich useful teach-text of principles and inspiration that is essentially timeless. Inevitably the particulars of computer art programs and other tools will continue to evolve, but the magazine accents the most difficult and important elements of our craft; the core skills, knowledge and techniques of imaginative storytelling and drawing.

You won't find thin advice presenting tricks, shortcuts or gimmicks as substitutes for the deep knowledge, dedication and hard work required to achieve excellence in this vastly demanding form of creativity. The readers of *DRAW!* are exposed to many intricacies of visual artmaking that have nearly disappeared from many art school curriculums—hard practical expertise shared by established working professionals who rank among the best in their fields. I share Mike's vision of the magazine as the completion of a circular personal quest; *DRAW!* strives to be an ongoing source of the concrete information and insight he and I so desperately needed and wanted as young artists struggling to improve.

I'm proud to be in such company, and consider it both a rare opportunity and a professional obligation to share what I've learned with the readers of *DRAW!*, who are spread across the globe. The results of talent, experience and effort are self-evident, but the means of achieving those results are not, and that is *DRAW!*'s mission—to expose the inner workings of excellence in narrative artwork and help every reader achieve their aspirations as artists.

I thank Mike for creating *DRAW!* and inviting me to contribute—I'm sure this collection is only the first of many to come!

Bret Blevins



Another humorous caricature of Mike by his pal Blev.

OFF THE BOARD: AN INTRODUCTION



DRAW! editor Mike Manley working away in his studio in suburban Philadelphia. Photo by Sofia Negron.

You hold in your hands the first of what I hope will be many “best of” collections of *DRAW!* magazine. It took a lot of work and love to get to this point, on the part of many, many people besides myself, and the great benefit for me is that along the way, I also not only got to make new friends in the process, but see great art and learn new things myself as we share the collective wealth, some history, and knowledge from professionals on the profession of cartooning. Each working cartoonist is like a library of information, and is unique. We all use pens, pencils and brushes, the same basic tools, all observe the natural world, the human body, and yet we all process that information through our artistic lenses differently. No two artists draw exactly alike. We each have a different process, a slightly different spin on the ball.

Cartoonists—specifically comic artists in America—are one-man-bands, unlike animators who collectively work in large studios for the most part and are able to combine, collect and share the efforts and skills and experience gained, especially in the case of Walt Disney. The cartoonist is usually a solo performer, one man, or woman, working by themselves in the studio, sometimes with assistants. There is not the great pooling of talent, no great pooling of ideas in the way Disney did, so we learn from each other by observation and practice—or if fortunate enough, maybe for a time as an apprentice to a more experienced cartoonist. But that doesn’t happen as often today.

And cartooning is as popular as ever, maybe even more popular than it was when I was a teenager. From the success of *The Simpsons*, the newspaper strips, movies and animation, TV shows and cartoons featuring the comic book heroes, dark knights, talking dogs and cats or three guys named Ed, comics and cartooning are everywhere and a big part of our worldwide culture and entertainment. Everyone knows Popeye,

Batman, Snoopy, and Superman the world over. I don’t think cartoons will ever stop being popular, and thus the cartoonist will always be in demand, even if we eventually switch from the old school techniques of ink and paper to go all digital.

DRAW!’s origin in many ways goes back 30 years. By the time I was ten or eleven I knew I wanted to be a cartoonist, specifically a comic artist drawing super-heroes for a living, or maybe even work as an animator. I was hooked on comics early, thanks to my dad buying them for me, my hours of TV-watching of Hanna-Barbera cartoons like *Space Ghost*, *Frankenstein Jr.* and *Jonny Quest*. I had a magazine purchased from a Gulf gas station, which showed some step-by-steps of how to draw various Disney characters with behind-the-scenes of animators working at Disney. I read the cover off of that magazine even as I struggled to do a good drawing of Jiminy Cricket, despite the easy way the 3-step drawing process showed. I seemed to be destined to become a cartoonist. I was always surrounded by cartoons and drawing them.

I was greatly encouraged in my drawing as a kid by both my parents and especially my grandmother, who worked at Chrysler as a secretary, and would bring home loads of scrap paper and extra pencils and markers. My mom’s father—my grandfather—was a commercial artist, a self-taught man, who learned to do calligraphy, display signs and lettering by practicing with a brush and ink, using the want ads section of the daily newspaper, turned on its side, where he practiced lettering using the columns as guidelines. He went on to be very successful in that business and also taught himself to paint and play the guitar. So art was also known as a real profession, one in which you could make a living. Believe me, I know that helps a lot as I have friends who, though now are very successful as artists, were not encouraged as much as I was.

At the age of nine or ten my grandfather passed onto me a well-worn copy of Andrew Loomis’ *Fun With A Pencil*, a copy I still own today, and I think it is possibly the inspiration for *DRAW!*, the seed that became the mighty oak. The beauty

of that book to my young eyes was that it showed you the process, removed a bit of the "how do you do that?", the mystery and balled-up-paper frustration of drawing. Loomis went on step-by-step, showing you how to do a drawing, and covered complex things like perspective which was beyond my tender years then. I just wanted to draw super-heroes, robots, Space Ghost, Superman and Jonny Quest, but his process helped me do more complex drawings.

When my family moved from Detroit to Ann Arbor I discovered the local comics shop, the long gone but not forgotten Eye of Agamotto. I visited almost daily; I was hooked on comics for sure. They were my destiny, and there my love for comics and desire to be a professional was committed. As a young artist struggling against my ignorance, the only chances I had to get actual feedback from a real comic artist were few and far between. I scoured old book shops and the local public library in Ann Arbor where I grew up looking for books on drawing, illustration or comics. Occasionally I'd drag my portfolio and samples to a local con and get some real pointers from a pro, get shot down but gain some new insight or knowledge. There was no Internet with hundreds of sites devoted to comics, where you can post art and ask questions. Also living in Michigan, not New York City (the Mecca of the comic industry), nor Los Angeles (the Mecca of the animation business), made getting that first job harder and any possible apprenticeship practically impossible. But I kept at it, kept drawing, studying, trying to be like a sponge, absorbing anything that might help me learn something new... and all the time wishing there were more books on how to draw comics, and specifically comic books, super jock action and all the difficult drawing problems you have to master. Again, Grandma came through with a copy of Lee and Buscema's *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* for Christmas, and it was thoroughly digested; yet it left me knowing there was more that needed to be divulged. So the seed, the need for *DRAW!*, was always there.

Today it seems like almost every week, and certainly almost once a month, there is a comic convention somewhere, where you can meet and talk to professionals and haul your portfolio samples around, and more books on drawing comics for sure have come along in the wake of the Lee/Buscema book. But there has never been a magazine that was really as in-depth as I wanted, that really had top pros showing you how they actually did it with real examples, published examples of actual pages and art, the real process. It seems that many other professions have professional journals or "how-to" seminars or books covering the way things are made or done, showing the process.

And one day in a conversation with friends the idea came up again, and someone mentioned John Morrow's name. I was already a fan and customer of many of TwoMorrows' products, and it seemed like a good fit. A quick phone call to John and a few exchanges later, we had a deal set to do *DRAW!*, a name we settled on when

nothing else seemed appropriate. *DRAW!* says it all! But I certainly could not have done it without John's help and patience as well as his righthand man Eric Nolen-Weathington, who sand off the rough edges, proof my spelling, and deal with a lot of the not-so-fun business aspects of publishing.

I also could not have been as successful without the help, encouragement, hard work and dedication of the regular contributors to *DRAW!* like Ande Parks, Paul Rivoche, Alberto Ruiz and especially my best friend Bret Blevins, whose moral encouragement was as important as his fantastic art and tutorials.

There has never been a professional magazine on cartooning where you actually had tutorials by professionals in the way we do them in *DRAW!* magazine. This is the magazine the 17-year-old Mike Manley so badly wanted and wished for as a young and struggling artist. So what you hold in your hands is the combination of hard work and love of the medium of comic art and the crafts of cartooning and animation by very generous people who are willing to share their collective knowledge with you.

Best,



Mike Manley, editor

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Find out more about Draw! Magazine at:
www.drawmagazine.com

LAYOUT AND DRAWING USING THE COMPUTER

A CASE HISTORY by Dave Gibbons

One of the freshest approaches to Batman in recent years was the *Batman: Black & White* series, later collected in a single volume, edited by Mark Chiarello and published by DC Comics. When DC revived the concept as an occasional back-up feature in the *Batman: Gotham Knights* monthly, I leapt at Mark's invitation to contribute a story.

Rather than something grim and moody, I had the notion of doing a light-hearted piece that hopefully embodied a little of the feel that Dick Sprang, Alex Toth and Bruce Timm had brought to the character in some of my favorite Batman stories. A number of techniques, from the high contrast to the delicately etched, had already been used in the *Black & White* stories; I

thought that a clean, graphic look using a limited number of flat tones would look novel in context and would be perfect for the feel of the story. I also decided to dispense with panel rules, giving the art an open flavor, reminiscent of the old Dell comics.

It immediately struck me that such a style of artwork could be produced very effectively using my computer. It's a Macintosh PowerPC 8500, a little outdated now, but with a faster G3 processor installed and 208mb of RAM. I used a Wacom pressure-sensitive graphics tablet and Adobe Photoshop 5 and Illustrator 8 software to do the digital work. But, to begin at the beginning, first I needed a story...

As I mused over the idea of a black-&-white story, I suddenly came up with an appropriate "black-&-white" connection that gave me the foundation for the whole piece. (It's the final panel of the printed story, so you'll have to seek out *Batman: Gotham Knights* #12 if you're curious!)

Pretty soon, I came up with a whole lot more familiar objects that were typically black-&-white. From there, I had to come up with a reason for a bad guy to be interested in stealing black-&-white objects; once I'd established that, I more-or-less had my eight-page story.

Once it all made sense to me, I wrote an outline and e-mailed it off to editor Chiarello. The outline ran about three pages in length and pretty much told everything in the story. I'd write proportionately much less for a longer story, but this eight-pager was a very tightly packed piece of storytelling.

I wrote the text using Microsoft Word, which I've set up to use macros to change with a keystroke from the formatting used for, say, picture description to that used for character dialogue. Recently, I've been using Final Draft, primarily a screenwriting application, but more intuitive than Word for comics writing, too.

BATMAN BLACK AND WHITE

STORY OUTLINE FOR 8 PAGES

by Dave Gibbons
April 10th 2000

(This is a story told in the style of a Dick Sprang classic. Surreal staging, headlong pace and a bizarre villain.)

We open in the museum sponsored by wealthy chemical magnate WINSOR MUNSELL. He is showing millionaire playboy BRUCE WAYNE around. There are many great treasures on display; paintings, sculptures, tapestries.

WAYNE is commenting on the exquisite, magically lifelike color of a portrait of Munsell (which we can't see because of viewing angles) and enquiring about the artist. Munsell is edgy, saying that he'd rather not talk about it, when a bottle comes smashing through one of the building's stained glass windows.

As the bottle breaks, clouds of chlorine gas belch out, choking guards and museum-goers. The label on the bottle reads: Bleach. Thinking quickly, Wayne changes to BATMAN and, placing a respirator to his face, gets ready for action.

As the mist clears, a figure smashes open a display case and grabs an antique chess set. The figure is dressed in a white suit, with a black and white striped shirt and white tie. He is white-skinned, with white-streaked black hair and wears sunglasses with one black lens and one white. He has white shoes with black spots and one black and one white glove.

As he makes for the door, the figure pauses by the brilliantly colored portrait (we see only the frame, with the artist's name: ROSCOE CHIARA), pulling another bottle out. As he goes to fling the contents over the picture, BATMAN swings down and grabs him. The figure swings round and throws the contents of the bottle in the Dark Knight's face. It's black India Ink. Blinded, BATMAN cannot stop the Black and White Bandit from escaping.

We cut to the Bandit's lair. It's completely furnished in black and white; leopard skin furniture, op-art prints on the wall. In pride of place sits the stolen chess set, black and white pieces laid out on a checkerboard.

The bandit, clearly unhinged, talks to his obedient Dalmatian dog.

He is, in fact, ROSCOE CHIARA, the once world-famous artist. Renowned for his masterly and unequalled use of color, he was commissioned by Winsor Munsell to paint his portrait. Munsell wanted him to use some experimental new paints his chemical factory had produced, thus not only getting a picture of himself, but useful publicity for his paints.

The paints were indeed wonderful, possessing chromatic values beyond anything the world had seen. In the hands of the great Chiara, the results were breathtaking, almost supernatural.

But, horror! The chemicals present in the pigments had a bizarre effect on the painter over the long hours he worked on the picture. After headaches and visual problems, he fell asleep exhausted on the night he finished the picture and when he awoke the next morning, in front of it, was shocked to see that it was now black and white. Perhaps the paints were not stable and

The outline was approved with minimal changes and I set to work on the script. Although I was going to be drawing this myself, I still wanted to tie down all the factors at the appropriate stage, so I wrote pretty much a full script. This was e-mailed for approval and, again, approved with little modification.

Once I'd hit on the idea of an artist who couldn't see color, I went to town with color references in the dialogue and the character names. Winsor Munsell, for instance, is an amalgam of world-famous "Artists' Colormen" Winsor and Newton, together with Albert H. Munsell, one of the most famous color theoreticians.

Our villain's name, Roscoe Chiara, is a juggling of the art term "chiaroscuro," simply defined as "the play of light and shade." Editor Chiarello's name might also have added inspiration here!

Chiara's character and motivation were pretty much that of a standard Joker-mold Batman villain; a lunatic out for revenge. My version of Batman also stuck to the classic characterization; stolid and imperturbable, more of a "mid-gray" than a "dark" Knight.

With regard to the formatting of the script, I like to begin every art page on a new typed page, as it makes things easier for the artist, in this case me. I use all capitals for picture description, which obviates the need to change case in what is, essentially, a stream-of-consciousness technical note to the artist. This also means that copy to be lettered can be typed in lower case for regular lettering, upper case for heavily lettered emphasis and underlined upper case for extra heavy. The story runs to eight pages in total, but I'll be using just the opening page as an example throughout this article.

With the words pretty much set (although the eagle-eyed will notice a late change of title), it was time to start drawing. I always begin with a small thumbnail sketch, in pencil, of each page. These will typically be 1½" x 2½" in size, big enough to draw comfortably in, but small enough not to tempt me into indicating detail. I've created a series of small templates in Adobe Illustrator that are scaled to a comic book page, with margins, etc. and I print out as many of these as I need. I'd usually have eight, or even sixteen, thumbnails on a single page of typing paper.

I'll correct or redraw these little images until I'm happy with the composition and storytelling. At this size, alternatives can be produced very quickly and a whole sequence of pages can be reviewed at a glance.

If I'm then going straight to drawing the full-size line artwork only, I "ink" the thumbnails to clarify the spotting of blacks, using a Fountain Pentel, a Rotring Art Pen or any other handy, informal inking tool. Again, I'm thinking of composition, rather than detail, at this stage. In this case, I "inked" the thumbnails using my computer and started by scanning the pencil versions in at 300 dpi resolution, in grayscale.

BATMAN BLACK AND WHITE - 8 PAGE STORY

1. SPLASH PICTURE. THIS TAKES UP THE TOP 2/3 OF THE PAGE. A SYMBOLIC UPPER BODY SHOT OF BATMAN LOOMING OVER THE GOTHAM SKYLINE. PROMINENT IS THE MUNSELL MUSEUM, A GOTHIC PILE WITH CRABATE WINDOWS AND CHIMNEY STACKS. ITS NAME CHISELLED ACROSS AN IMPRESSIVE PORTICO. TUXEDED MEN AND WOMEN IN EVENING DRESS ARE CONVERGING ON IT. SOME GETTING OUT OF LIMOS. THE STREETS ARE WET, REFLECTING THE LIGHT OF THE MUSEUM'S WINDOWS. CLOUDS SCUD ACROSS THE FACE OF THE MOON.

LOGO: BATMAN

CAPTION: In his CHECKERED CAREER, the DARK KNIGHT has enlightened many COLORFUL VILLAINS as to the EVIL of their ways, but it's quite a CONTRAST when Gotham PALES beneath the SHADOW of...

STORY TITLE: THE CHIAROSCURO CAPERS

CREDITS: STORY & ART: Dave Gibbons

2. INSIDE THE MUSEUM, THE UPPER CRUST OF GOTHAM SOCIETY MILL AROUND THE TREASURES IN THE HUGE MAIN HALL. THEY WEAR TUXEDOS AND BLACK EVENING DRESSES. THERE ARE ALL MANNER OF PAINTINGS, SCULPTURES, TAPESTRIES AND EXPENSIVE LOOKING GOODIES ON DISPLAY. NEAR THE FOREGROUND, ROTUND CHEMICAL MAGNATE WINSOR MUNSELL SHOWS OFF HIS COLLECTION TO DEBONAIR PLAYBOY BRUCE WAYNE.

CAPTION: It's a RED-LETTER DAY for ART LOVERS in uptown Gotham as the WINSOR MUNSELL MUSEUM OF FINE ART opens its doors for the first time...

MUNSELL: Well, you know, Bruce, when one has money AND taste, one is under an OBLIGATION to bring a little COLOR into people's DRAB lives...

WAYNE: Heh. SPEAKING of color, Winsor...

3. CLOSER ON MUNSELL AND WAYNE. WAYNE IS ADMIRING A PICTURE THAT HANGS ON THE WALL NEAR US (WE CAN ONLY SEE A CORNER OF THE ROCCO FRAME. MUNSELL LOOKS A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE, RUNNING A FINGER ROUND HIS TIGHT SHIRT COLLAR).

WAYNE: ...this PORTRAIT of you really is quite EXQUISITE in its HUES. So VIVID, so LIFELIKE. Is the ARTIST here tonight?

MUNSELL: If, no. P-gear CHIARA was a little... UNSTABLE, you know. Had some PROBLEMS. Next... most UNFORTUNATE.

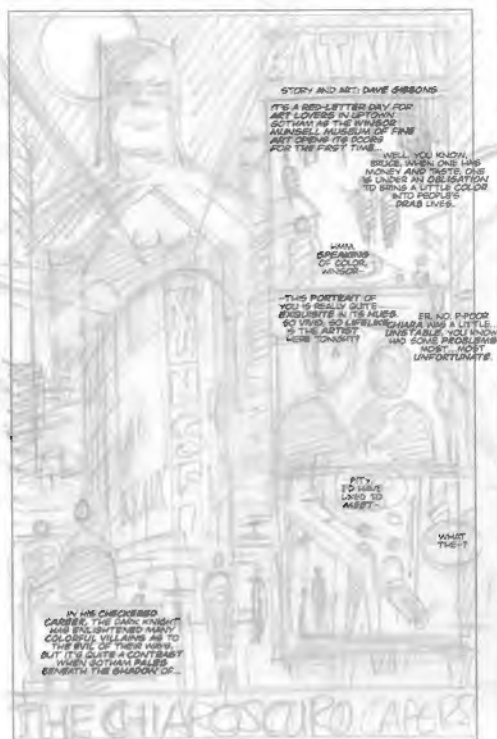
4. IN THE FOREGROUND, A LARGE BOTTLE, LABELLED "BLEACH," SUDDENLY COMES CRASHING THROUGH A WINDOW. IN THE BACKGROUND, THE GREAT AND GOOD TURN, SURPRISED. WAYNE TENSES FOR ACTION.

WAYNE: Pity. I'd have liked to MEET...

SOUND EFFECT: KRAAAASSSH

MUNSELL: What the -?





In Adobe Photoshop, I resized the thumbnail to the size of the printed page. This was made easier by using the precisely scaled thumbnail blanks mentioned earlier. This page-size rough will only be used as a guide and is easier to work with at a fairly low resolution. I adjusted the levels in Photoshop, to clarify the image and get rid of background noise.

In Adobe Illustrator, I placed the print-size rough in a layer, dimmed the image to 60% and locked it off. On another layer, I typed in the balloon lettering, to give me some idea of how much space it would occupy. I was particularly concerned about fitting it in the opening panels. Using Illustrator's type tools, I was able to quickly achieve the best setting for the lines. In this case, I used 7 point type, with 7.5 point leading.

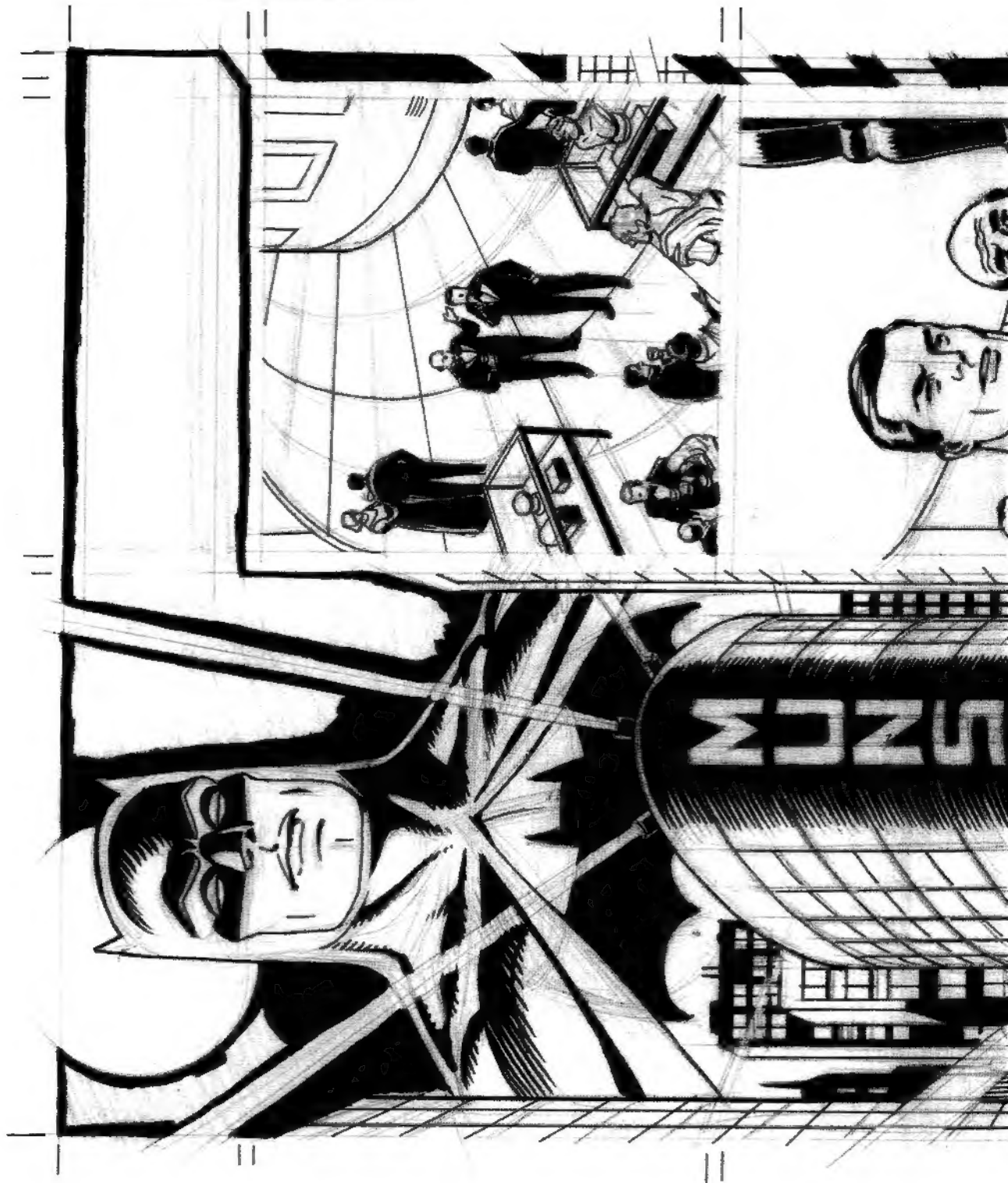
The font that I use was made for me by Comicraft, using examples of my hand-lettering. It's possible to make a font of one's own hand-lettering using Macromedia's Fontographer software, but it really requires the skill of a trained typographer to do it properly. In terms of cost too, the time taken and the cost of the software would probably outweigh the expense of having it made professionally. I find it a great time-saver and like the results as much as the "real thing."

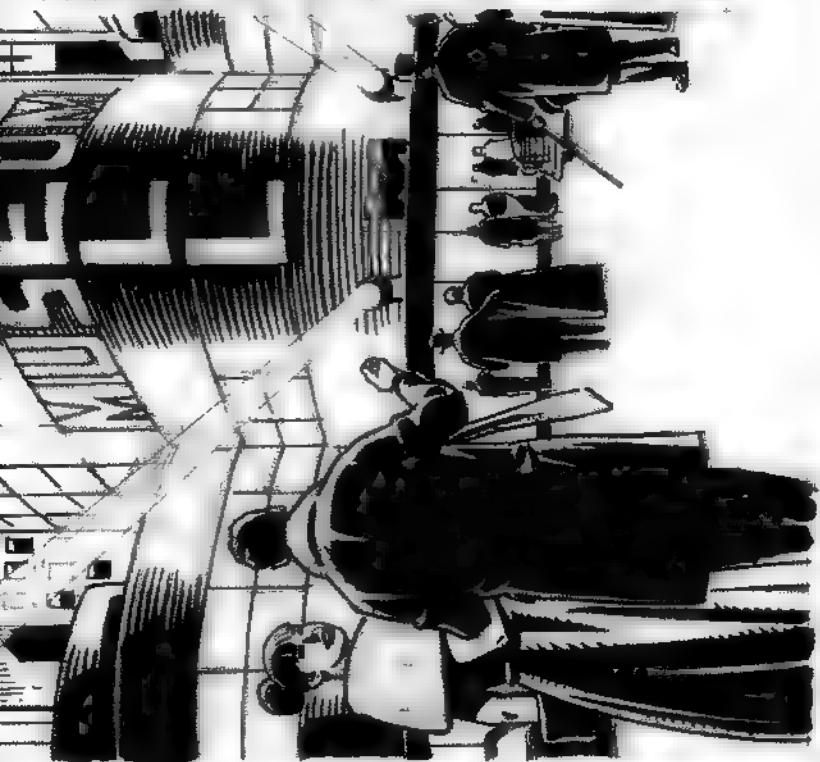
Opening this "rough-lettered" image in Photoshop, I organized it on five layers. The topmost layer held my lettering, the next layer down was my "gray" layer, the next down was my "inking" layer, the next down held the penciled thumbnail and, at the bottom, was a white background. Since the image was at low resolution, five layers caused no processor delay even on my fairly modest system.

I was now able to work very quickly on the inking layer, using the unanti-aliased Pencil tool to sketch in my linework and solid blacks. The Wacom graphics tablet allows a very responsive feel to this process, much like using a flexible pen. I also drew rough balloon shapes on this layer. I moved elements around using Selection Marquees on this and the penciled thumbnail layer, until everything fit comfortably. It's also possible to use the Free Transform tool to scale, skew or rotate individual elements very fluidly, copying to new layers, if required, to try out variations. Using the Line tool, constrained to the horizontal and the vertical by the Shift key, I drew in panel borders.

On the "gray" layer, again using the Pencil tool and a palette of only three gray tones (25%, 50%, and 75%), I quickly laid in the gray tones. By setting the Blending Mode of the gray layer to Darken, I could still see the linework underneath. I reduced the opacity of the thumbnail layer to clarify my view as necessary while I worked. At times, I used the Pencil tool in Behind mode, which means that tones already laid down can be preserved while still working freely. Whilst this process is laborious to describe, it's very quick and intuitive in practice and gives results impossible to achieve with traditional markers or tracing paper.

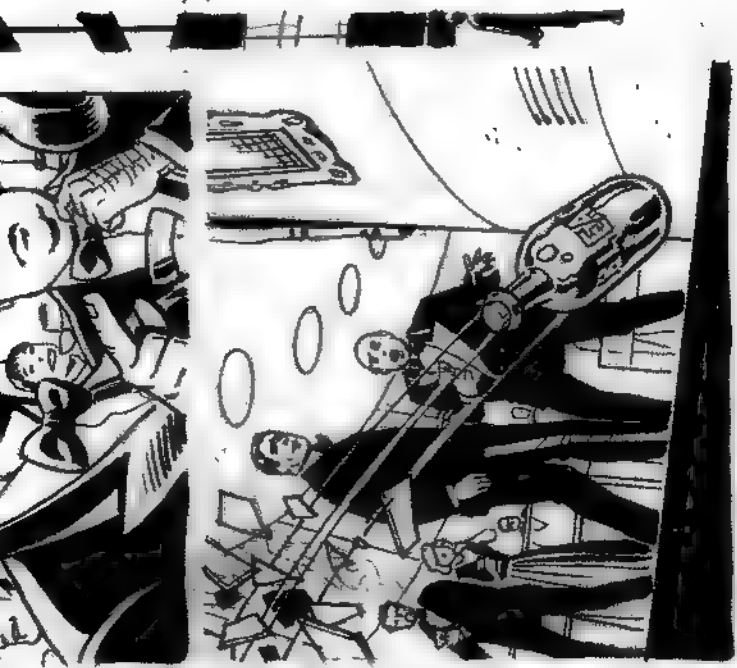
Finally, I deleted the pencil thumbnail layer and Flattened the image. I printed this out at comic book print size as a rough for drawing the final art and also printed an artwork-sized version from which to take the panel dimensions and lettering areas.





With the print-size printout to one side as a guide, I penciled out the page knowing exactly the area left to draw in, once the balloons were added, and visualizing just where gray tones would be added to support the drawing. After ruling precise register marks, I then inked the piece, again using a Fountain Pentel marker, with a variety of fine markers for details and a Pentel Brush Pen for solid blacks. As mentioned earlier, durability of materials is not essential and these markers are easier and quicker to use than traditional dip pens and brushes, although I use these, too, if necessary. Large flat black areas can be left for "one-click" filling once scanned into the computer.

This scan of the artwork is at actual size and has been adjusted to show the pencil lines that, in practice, would be removed by adjusting the image to give the crisp black-&-white linework seen on the following pages. Note the sound effect I decided to omit.



One of the advantages of working with the computer is the freedom to work with materials other than the traditional India ink and Bristol board, since the original art only has to survive from drawing table to scanner

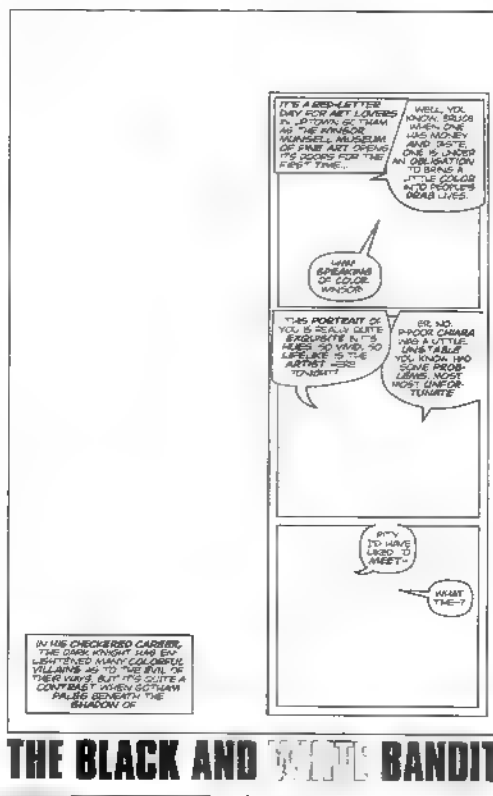
To produce this artwork, I used good quality layout paper (Daler Studio 45), through which I was easily able to trace the panel rules, balloon areas and compositional areas from my large printout, in pencil. I used a Col-erase Blue pencil (#20044). This is a virtually non-repro blue pencil which still has the virtue of being erasable. This means it can be easily removed while working but obviates the need to pencil-erase the whole page once inked. A Light Blue (#1283) is also available

The hand-drawn artwork was scanned at 400 dpi in grayscale. It was then sharpened and adjusted using the Threshold command, by eye, to remove gray pixels (such as pencil marks) and match the full size linework as accurately as possible. The image size was reduced to 66.67%, which is print size, with the resolution kept at 400 dpi.

The Adobe Illustrator file containing the lettering was re-opened and the thumbnail image replaced by the finished artwork image, again dimmed to 60% for clarity of working. The lettering was adjusted and balloons and rules drawn accurately using Illustrator's precise vector drawing tools. The Ellipse tool was used for balloons but the shapes adjusted using the Direct Selection tool to give a less mechanical look.

The logo, credits and title display lettering were designed separately in Illustrator and added to the art later in the process.

(The image shown here is an intermediate stage before masking off overlapping word balloons and removing the black outline from the gutter rules.)



The placed image of the final art was removed from the Illustrator file which was then saved and opened in Photoshop at 400 dpi, with anti-aliasing off, as a default transparent layer. This was then moved into the linework file, where it "floated above" the line art and was fine-tuned, cutting out overlaps and so on.

The image here shows the clean linework with the lettering and rules precisely overlaid, although the lettering and rule layer was not combined with the line art layer at this stage since I wanted it to mask out the art layers and save myself the necessity of working accurately to the panel edges.

I took the opportunity to do the corrections to the line art that I would have done using Process White in traditional media. Again, this makes the use of water-based ink drawing pens feasible for preparing the original artwork. It's also possible at this stage, for example, to draw long or subtle curves using Photoshop's Path tools, obviating the laborious use of ellipse guides or French curves.





ABOVE: The gray tones. A simple three-tone palette is used, with the Pencil and Paintbucket tools.

With the toned and inked rough from earlier displayed on screen, it's now a simple matter to follow its scheme and lay in the gray tones. The same simple three-tone palette is used, with the Pencil and Paintbucket tools

Once the first areas of each tone are laid in, it's easier to pick them up from the image rather than visit the swatch palette. None of the anti-aliased tools are used, so that the flat graphic look (perhaps emulating the look of Craftint board) is maintained.

This illustration shows the "grays" layer on its own. I initially filled the whole layer with the lightest gray, to be sure that no white specks would be left as I worked. Since the top layer containing the rules masks over the grays, I could work quite roughly under the panel edges whilst still maintaining a crisp look. I was more careful in key areas (such as the lighting on the close-up faces) but work proceeded far more quickly than would have been possible in traditional media

Note also the placing of the lightest areas to attract the reader's eye, developing the composition from the earlier tonal rough. Once the work was completed on the gray layer, I saved the final layered file

I usually save files I'm working on in Photoshop format since they open more quickly (this format is a necessity, anyway, where layers are to be preserved). However, final files are best saved as TIFFs, since this offers wider compatibility and better compression

At this point, I printed out the final pages for a last proofread. For some reason, it's easier to see errors in hard print than on screen. The same applies to proofreading scripts; it's much easier done sitting back with a blue pencil than looking at the monitor.

The attentive reader will notice that there is no copy on this page. In order to make the work more easily translatable in foreign markets, many publishers like to have artwork and lettering supplied as separate items.

Nevertheless, I always like to have the lettering visible while working since it gives a truer idea of the page's balance. (The same applies to traditionally created artwork, one reason why I've always lettered my own work, wherever possible.)



Now that the linework elements were set, a layer to receive the gray tones was sandwiched in-between the lettering layer and the base linework layer

This screen grab of the finished page shows the working environment with Layer palette thumbnails turned on to illustrate the contents of the three layers. The "grays" layer is set to Darken mode so that the linework layer remains unobscured as tones are added. The top layer acts as a clean mask for the underlying artwork.

It's worth organizing Photoshop's many palettes to keep the working area clear. I like to dock them along the bottom of the screen, where a double-click on the palette name tab will cause it to "pop" up or down. It's a good idea to become familiar with keyboard shortcuts, too. In this way, one can draw with one hand whilst the other rests near the keyboard, ready to modify the tool in use, zoom in or out on the image, etc.


I also prefer to keep the desktop background a neutral 50% gray so as not to distract from the working image. For absolute clarity, the palettes and desktop clutter can be completely hidden.

It was a simple matter to cut out the lettering from the balloons by copying the layer with the text on it and selecting all the text areas with the straight line Lasso tool. On one copy of the layer this selection was filled with white, to provide empty balloons; on the other, the selection was inverted and filled with white, leaving just the text.

This file was saved, then one copy was flattened to leave blank balloons and the other flattened to leave just text. Both were saved as TIFFs whilst the layered file was kept in Photoshop format against future changes.

The final print file was then assembled from these images in a page make-up application, such as Quark Xpress or Adobe InDesign. Since the image with the blank balloons and the image with only words had identical pixel dimensions they could be easily and precisely aligned for printing.

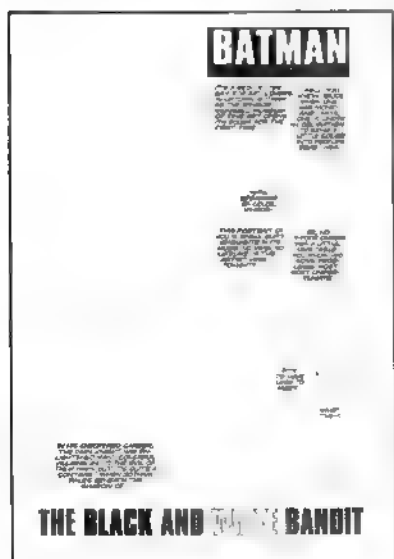
As mentioned earlier, I worked on the logo and title files as separate files (although I temporarily incorporated them in the working files so that I could judge the effect). These were also composited at the page make-up stage.

Finally, all that remained was to write the files on to a recordable CD and send it off to DC Comics. 



ABOVE: The final flattened art layer with the blank balloons.

LEFT: The Balloon layer containing all the copy and text.



BATMAN

STORY AND ART: DAVE GIBBONS

This is the finished title page. The final print file was assembled in a page layout application, such as Quark Xpress or Adobe InDesign.

IT'S A RED-LETTER DAY FOR ART LOVERS IN UPTOWN GOTHAM AS THE WINSOR MUNSELL MUSEUM OF FINE ART OPENS ITS DOORS FOR THE FIRST TIME ..

WELL, YOU KNOW, BRUCE, WHEN ONE HAS MONEY AND TASTE, ONE IS UNDER AN OBLIGATION TO BRING A LITTLE COLOR INTO PEOPLE'S DRAB LIVES.



HMM. SPEAKING OF COLOR, WINSOR--

--THIS PORTRAIT OF YOU IS REALLY QUITE EXQUISITE IN ITS HUES, SO VIVID, SO LIFELIKE IS THE ARTIST HERE TONIGHT?

ER, NO P-POOR CHIARA WAS A LITTLE UNSTABLE. YOU KNOW, HAD SOME PROBLEMS MOST .. MOST UNFORTUNATE



P TY I'D HAVE LIKED TO MEET

WHAT THE--?

IN HIS CHECKERED CAREER, THE DARK KNIGHT HAS ENLIGHTENED MANY COLORFUL VILLAINS AS TO THE EVIL OF THEIR WAYS, BUT IT'S QUITE A CONTRAST WHEN GOTHAM PALES BENEATH THE SHADOW OF

THE BLACK AND WHITE BANDIT

How to Draw Lovely Women

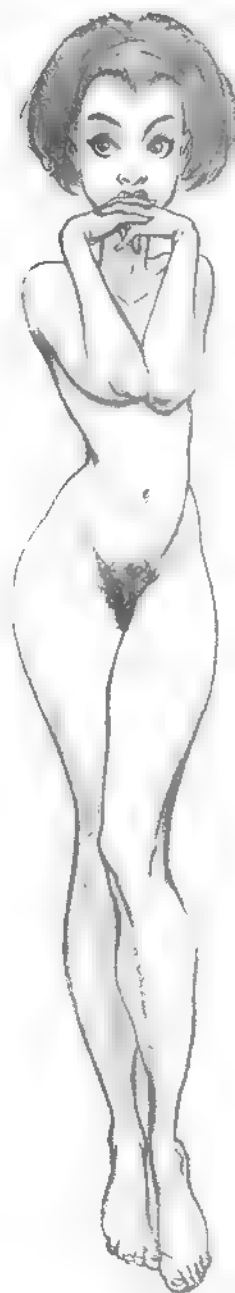
Part One by Bret Blevins

I love to draw women—the graceful female figure has been my favorite subject for as long as I can remember. I'm fascinated by every feature of a woman's amazing body, from the crest of her forehead to the curve of each toe. I'm here to share my enthusiasm with you.

Although you'll see images drawn from live models in some of the demonstrations, there isn't much information about drawing real women in these pages. This article is about creating symbolic visual icons of idealized women. Understanding the difference between a realistic drawing of an actual woman and a cartoon caricature of an imagined one is the heart of this whole matter. (Most of the ladies I draw for publication resemble living women about as much as Mickey Mouse resembles a living animal.)

Learning to clearly see the characteristics that convey an impression of sensuous feminine grace is the first step. Then you must translate these observations into the language of drawing—lines and shapes.

As any serious artist knows, the two short sentences above describe a process that can occupy a long lifetime—learning to make eloquent drawings of any subject is an ordeal, demanding your best effort over many years. The rewards are worth the trouble, though—so let's get started!



This first article concentrates on establishing the basic structure of a successful figure—it's a big subject, and it's the prime subject. No amount of rendering, anatomical detail, dramatic lighting, or other kind of surface effect can overcome a bad beginning. A poor understructure betrays any attempt to hide it.

(I know inferior work is often applauded, but that's no reason to lower your aims and accept the standards of someone else—the confusing truth is that acceptance is no measure of worth. If you plan to remain passionate about drawing for the rest of your life, take pains to admire what is good.)

A convincing caricature of any subject requires an artist to understand the workings of the real thing—this understanding empowers you to extract the defining essence and control it. For our purposes, that means close study of the way real women actually move.

The foundation of any graceful figure drawing is *rhythm*, so let's talk about recognizing it in nature. All natural rhythm seen in living figures is created by the body's interplay with gravity—in order to control its movements the body must always be in balance. Even in dance or gymnastic movements, leaps into space are within the sequence of a large rhythmic pattern. If balance is lost the result is a fall or collision. Careful study of people in movement, so happily accessible in today's world of recorded video, is a must for sharpening your observation. Watching slow motion sequences of dancers, or the actions of anyone with natural grace is a resource you can't afford to ignore.

Study of external movements will sharpen your understanding of our core subject, intrinsic rhythm—the shape relationships within a graceful human body.

As your ability to see rhythm grows more acute, you'll begin to notice that certain women never seem to arrange themselves in an awkward position. The gestures of their hands never appear to be aimless—they never look uncomfortable, whether sitting, standing, walking, running, reclining—eating, reading, watching, talking—even sleeping. These are the women to analyze for your picturemaking!

I should note the following material assumes a basic knowledge of human anatomy and proportion. For deeper study of this groundwork, I recommend:

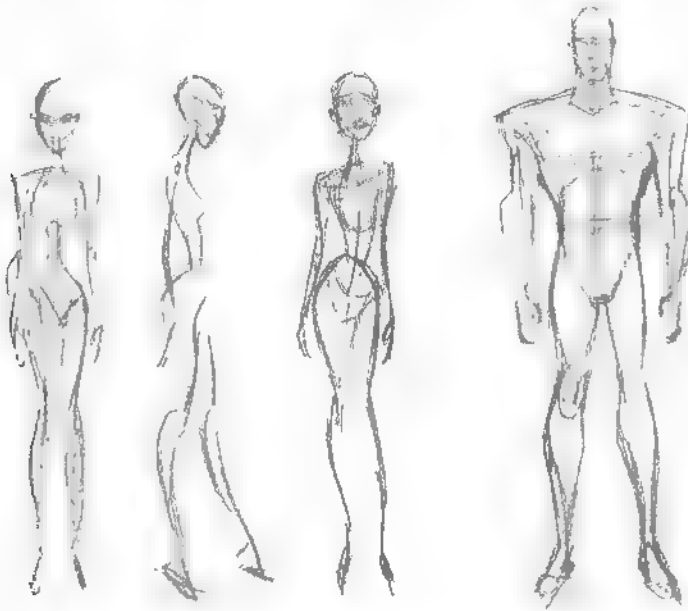
An Atlas of Anatomy for Artists
by Fritz Schider
(Dover Publications)

and Atlas Of Human Anatomy for the Artist
by Steven Peck
(Oxford University Press)

Both are excellent and in print.



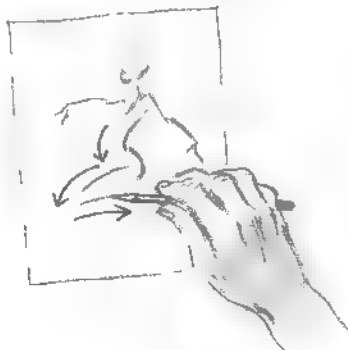
The basic skeletal framework shown here reflects my own personal taste in proportion and degree of fluidity each artist will eventually find his own “armature”—but the large relationships of interlocking curves is universal, and will help create a pleasing feminine rhythm in any figure. (I’ve included a male armature for comparison—note how the female differs in proportion and line direction throughout the entire body.)

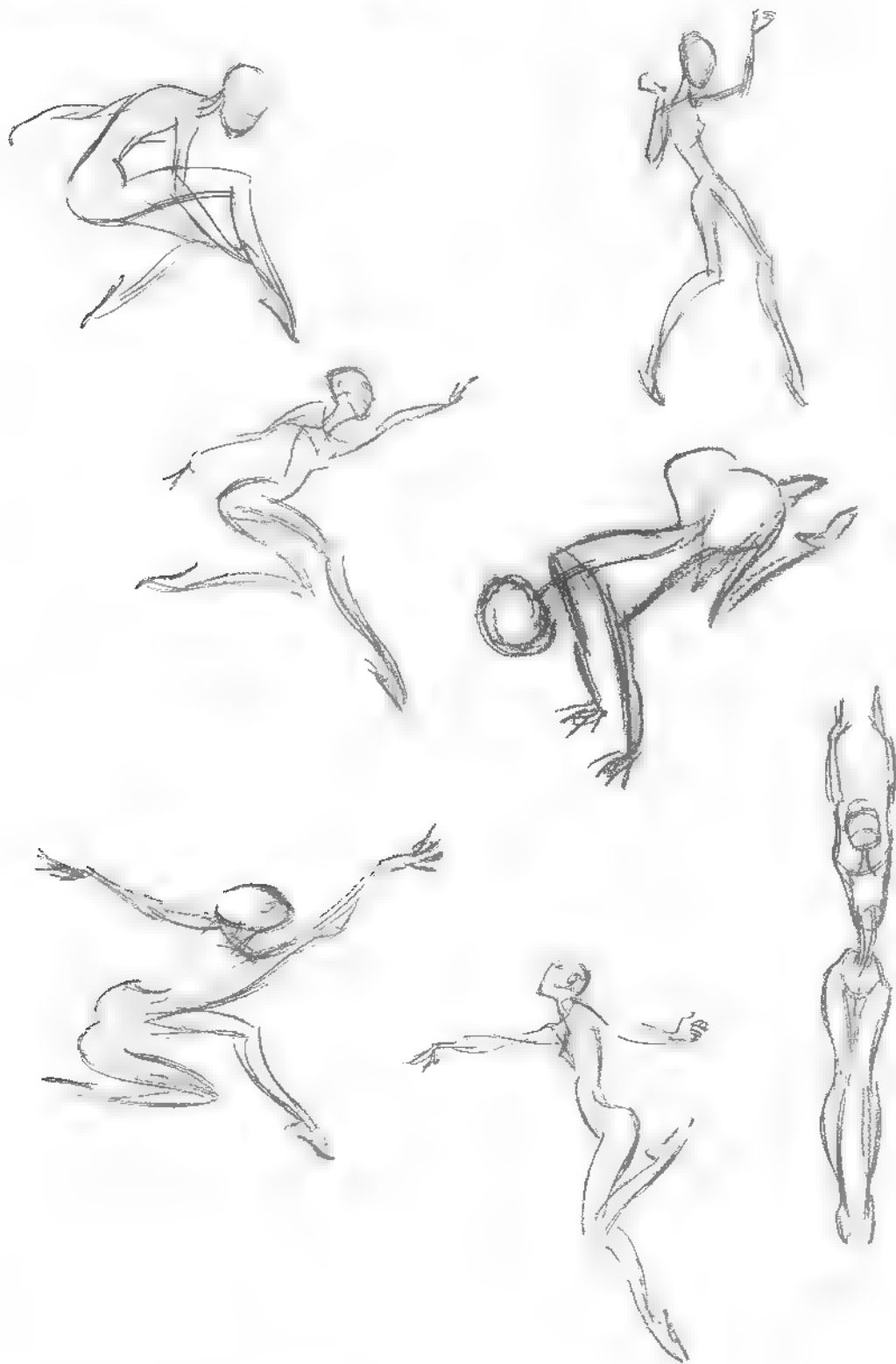


Study these drawings closely and you’ll find this basic pattern;



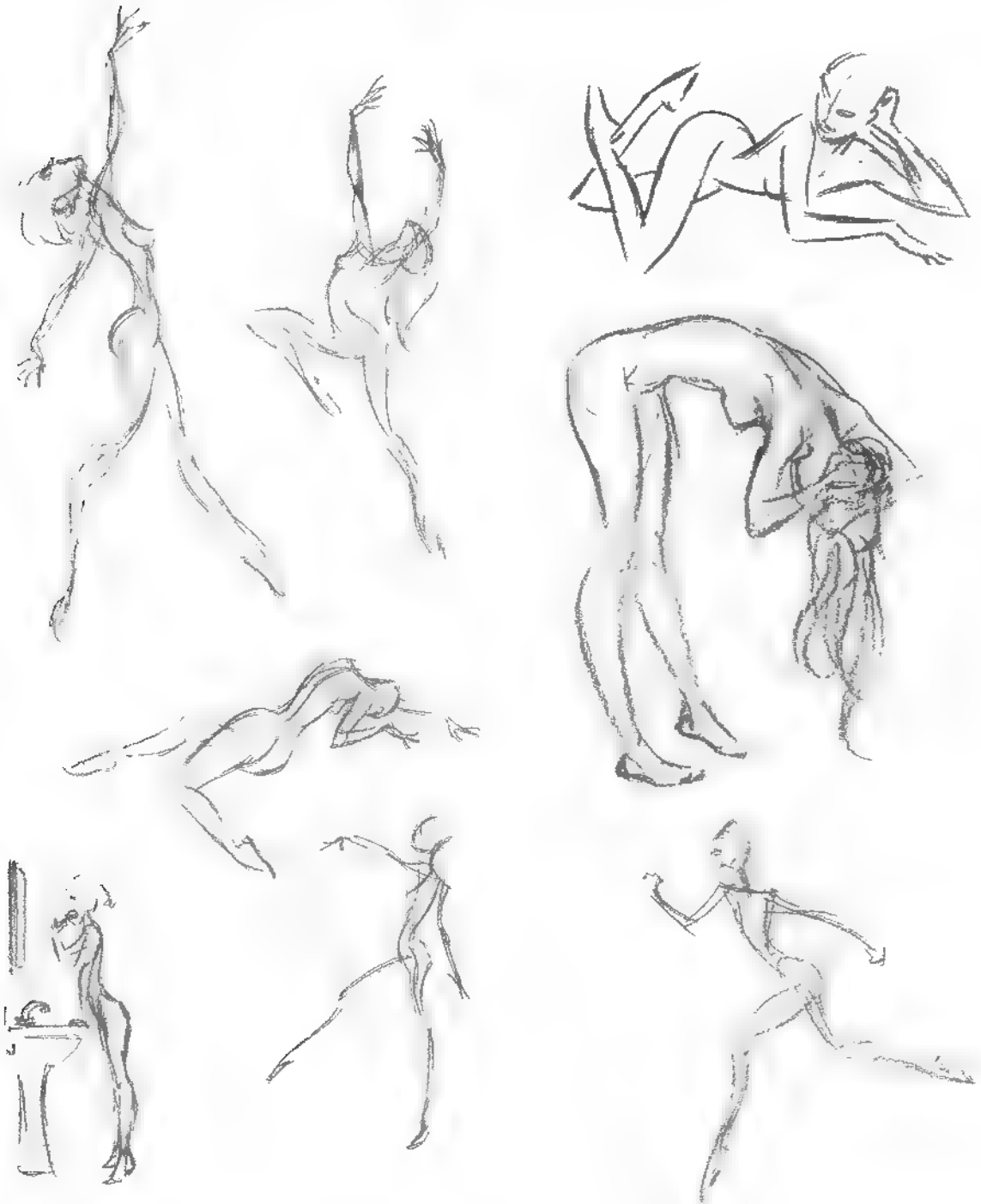
Practice blocking in your gesture with a soft lead (6B) pencil sharpened to a long tapering point, held sideways;





This allows movement of the entire arm, encouraging free, sweeping strokes.

Glide through the body with these large, alternating curves, paying close attention to the change of direction at the "joints."



Here you see how dominating the initial rhythm is—you can actually build reversed figures from the same “skeleton.”



BROKEN RHYTHM

It's important to complete the rhythm throughout the entire figure—note here how the position of the feet break the rhythm and diminish the quality of grace.

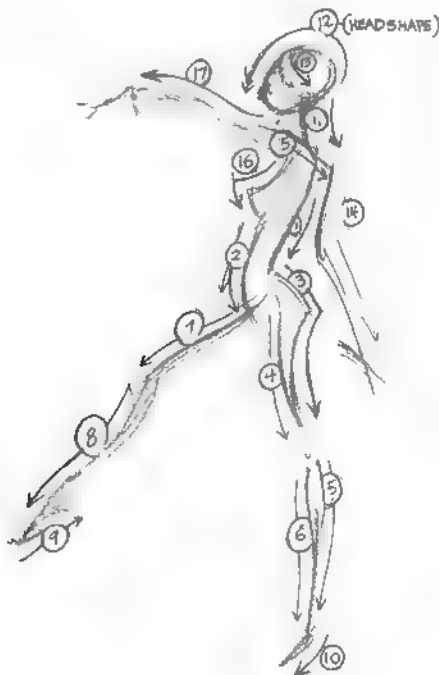


This “overstructure” of line direction will increase the grace of any pose—the only variation is the arched-forward torso position.



Then the entire back becomes the alternating curve of the thighs.

I've numbered the construction of one of the gesture drawings—the sequence will alter according to the defining feature of the pose, but in most cases it's best to start with the spine



Once you are comfortable using your armature, you'll find it invaluable for finding and defining the key elements of your pose quickly. Study this gallery of gesture drawings and you'll see how much crucial information you can convey in this first set of lines. You can capture attitude, mood, and quite a bit of personality in just one pass.

Draw women engaged in ordinary actions, as you see here. These are the sort of poses you can study firsthand all around you. (One editor I worked with judged the skill of an artist by his or her ability to draw a convincing picture of someone talking on a telephone.)



Now we come to something fun and important—careful study of these pairs of drawings will reveal subtle alterations in form, line direction (rhythm), and proportion that change the real woman into an iconic one. The first image of each set is a spontaneous watercolor done directly from a live model—though lovely, they are too subtle to be effective icons.



Drawn from the model



Stylized icon interpretation



Drawn from the model



Stylized icon interpretation

The second (iconic) drawing reduces detail and shading to one line that is easily read by the viewer. The anatomy has been refined and the rhythm enhanced by streamlining the waist and tapering the form of the neck, feet, and hands.

I'll wrap up this installment with a gallery of illustrations and working sketches that show how I apply the ideas we've been discussing.

Take special note of the rough doodles—you'll see that the "rhythm armature" guides every searching line. A close study of these will reveal much about the process of finding the right pose.

See you next issue! 



On this and the following pages we get to see several examples of Blevins employing his ample skill at drawing lovely women using the lessons laid out in this article, from the pages of his private sketch books and figure studies—ENJOY!

Here are a few comparisons of figures drawn from photos stylized into icons

Drawn from the model



Stylized icon interpretation



Drawn from the model

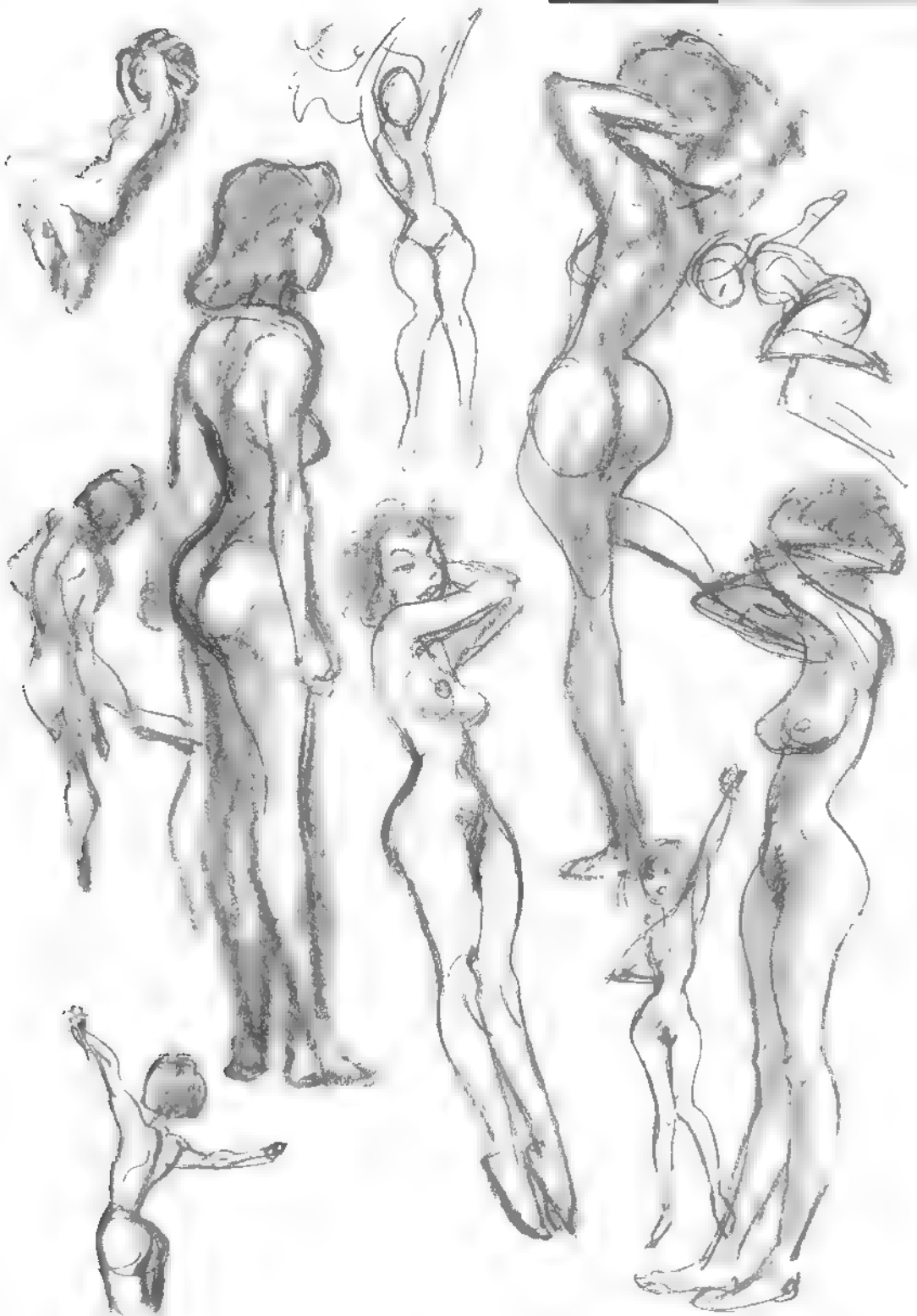


Stylized icon interpretation



More doodles and a few commissioned pieces for fans.



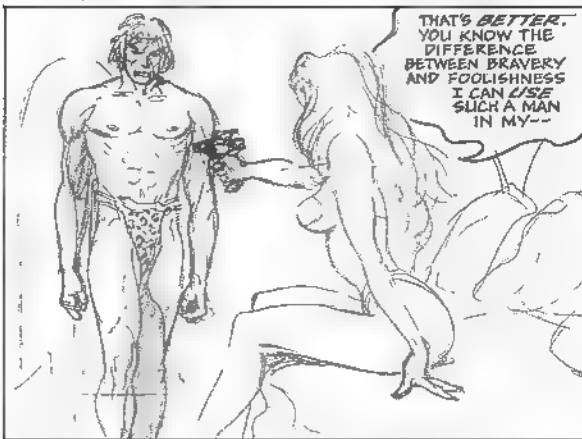




A cover to *Canon the Barbarian* featuring more flesh than sword.



Pencils from Bret's run on John Carter vs. Tarzan from Dark Horse Comics.

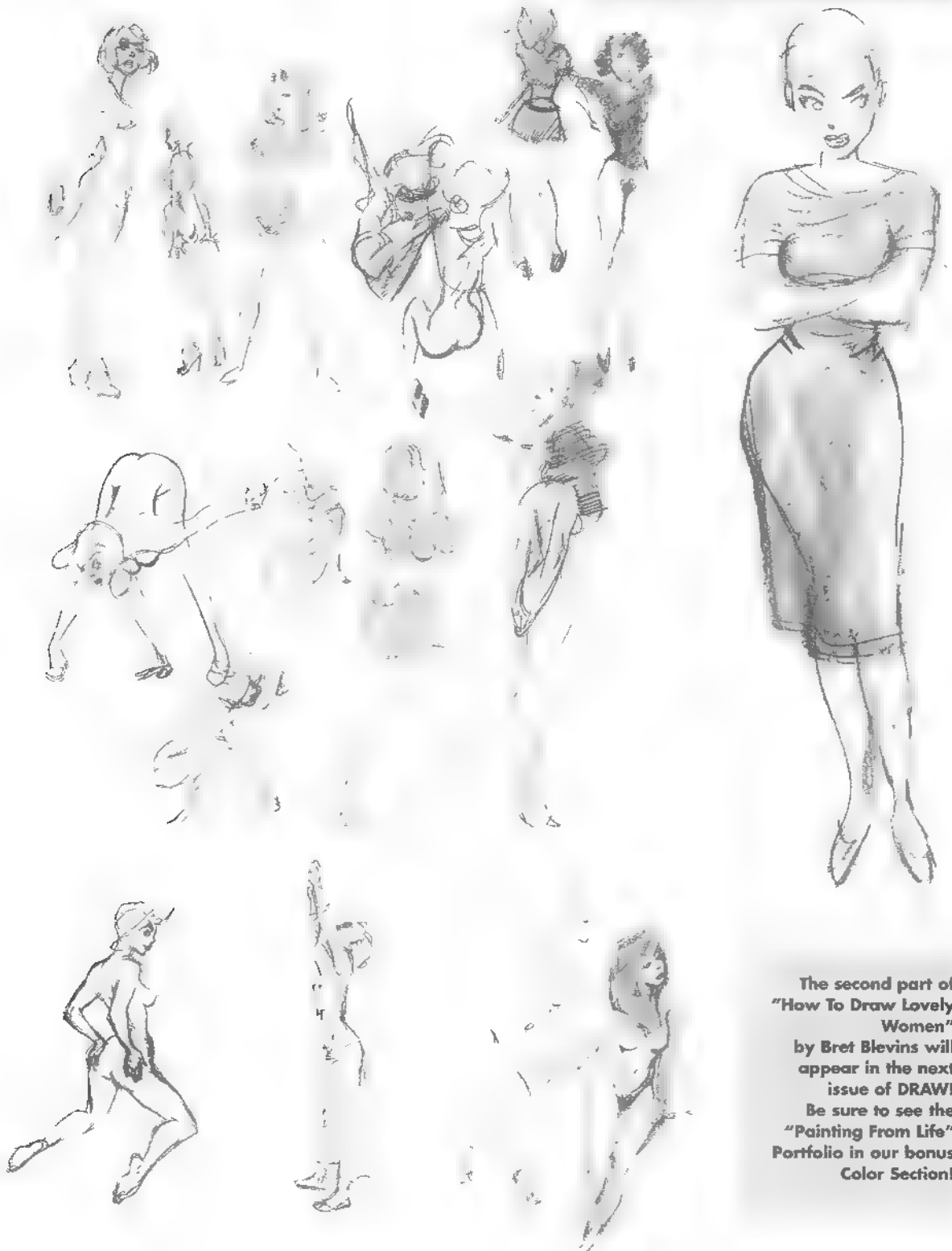




8/10/17



Figure studies and a few more commissioned pieces for fans.



The second part of
"How To Draw Lovely
Women"
by Bret Blevins will
appear in the next
issue of DRAW!
Be sure to see the
"Painting From Life"
Portfolio in our bonus
Color Section!

In Conjunction With

THE

WRITE

Now! #8

&

DRAW! #9

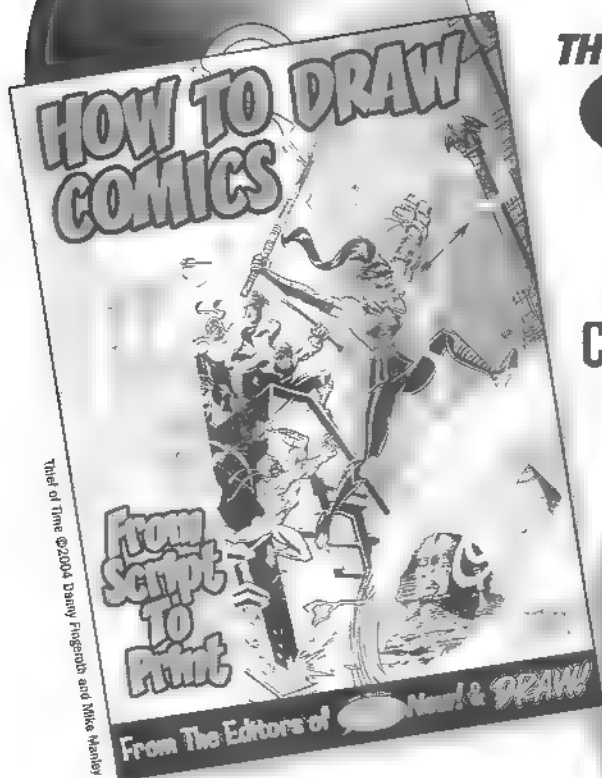
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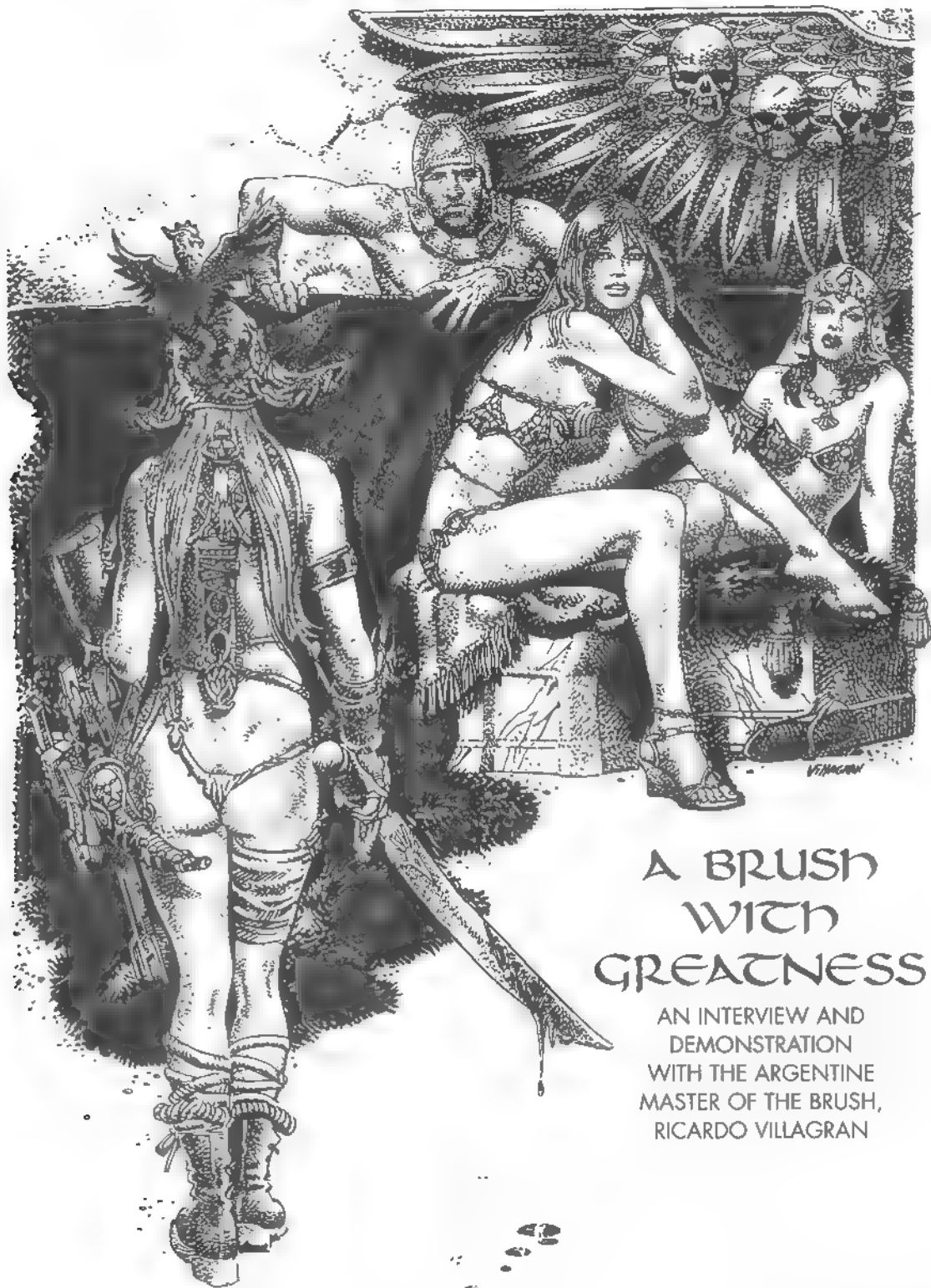
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A BRUSH WITH GREATNESS

AN INTERVIEW AND
DEMONSTRATION
WITH THE ARGENTINE
MASTER OF THE BRUSH,
RICARDO VILLAGRAN

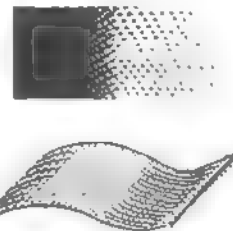
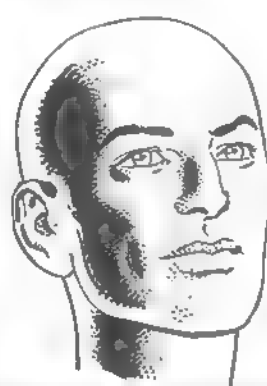
STEP 1



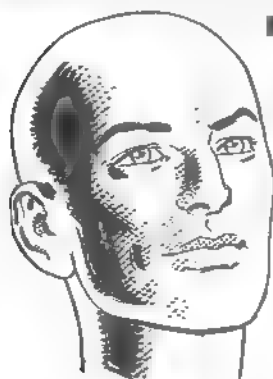
STEP 2



NON ORGANIC INKING



STEP 1: The head is inked in outline only. **STEP 2:** The blacks and amount of contrast is established. Adding more black, means higher contrast to the face. Villagran says a good balance he aims for is 30% black, unless it's a special effect or high contrast scene, like a night scene.



ORGANIC INKING



TOOLS - TECHNIQUE

BRUSH and INK

Villagran uses a No. 3 Winsor-Newton sable brush. He prefers Black Magic, in the old formula for his ink, but uses whatever he can find now.

NON-ORGANIC INKING: This is best used for inking cold or inanimate things like cars, machinery etc. Villagran feels inking with this evenness tends to make the figures look cold or stiff if he stipples them this way.

ORGANIC INKING: Keeping the dots more random in application; this warms up the drawing, giving it a less mechanical feel.

RICARDO VILLAGRAN: After I make the pencil sketch, I start to ink right away. I never finish the pencils very tightly

DRAW!: Yes, I notice when you are drawing something to ink yourself, you tend to draw very loose

RV: Yes, I never finish the pencils very well, because I always finish the drawing with ink.

DRAW!: And why is that? Why is it you work that way?

RV: I never finish the pencils very tightly because I feel like I'm doing the same work two times. I want to keep the work fresh.

DRAW!: Spontaneous?

RV: Yes, I only finish the work very well when inking. I guess it comes from studying the work of artists like Raymond and Caniff as a kid, trying to understand how they did their work. I know many artists who I feel lose a lot of time penciling things 3 and 4 times. It's my way of working. It's the most direct way for me to work.

DRAW!: So you don't like to work by doing layouts and blowing them up, or transferring them somehow?

RV: No, I like to work directly. The more directly I work, the better for me.

DRAW!: So you try to go directly from your head to the paper, no in-between steps?

RV: Exactly.

DRAW!: So let's say there is something in the drawing, an area that is going to require extra finish, extra care or detail, do you ever pencil that tighter? Or do you keep that loose as well?

RV: No, no, in general I still pencil the same. But sometimes if there is a gun or something like that, tanks or other specific reference, I will do a little more detail. Then I finish the drawing a little more. But in the case of the human body, I never finish the pencils very tightly. I will erase the pencils if something is wrong.

DRAW!: Now if you are inking someone else, say someone like Richard Howell on *Deadbeats*, or Garcia López, how does that effect the way you approach inking because the drawing is much more finished?

RV: Okay, in this case what I am trying to do, in a way, is

to introduce my style. And my style is something very detailed. Sometimes I follow exactly what I see, but sometimes I change things. It depends on the artist and the job.

DRAW!: So when you are inking a job for Marvel, DC, Claypool or whomever, you are saying what you try to do is introduce the way you work on top of the artist, the penciler? Make a marriage of the two styles?

RV: Exactly. What I try to do is something in-between the style of the penciler. I try to finish in my style because I often create the shadows and the lighting, because in many cases the penciler doesn't exactly indicate where the light is coming from. I don't always get their point of view. Sometimes I must create some shadows, some lighting effects. Often this is up to me. But sometimes the pencils are very well finished, so I try and follow what the penciler did. In this situation I try and find a balance between the

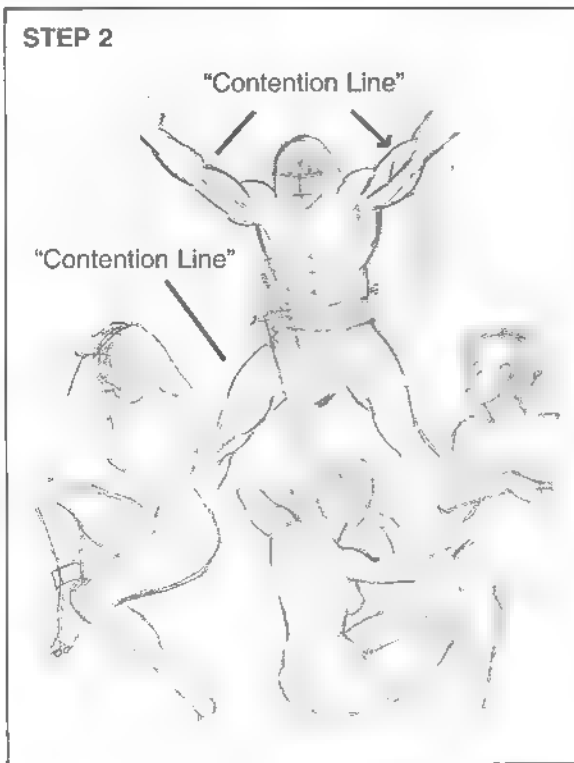
STEP 1: Villagran loosely pencils out the illustration. At this stage if he doesn't like what he sees, he erases it and starts again. He works very directly and loosely with a B or 2B pencil.

STEP 2: Satisfied with the drawing, next Villagran begins inking the figures, first by inking what he calls the "contention line," the external contour lines of the figures which separates the figure (active) from the background (static).

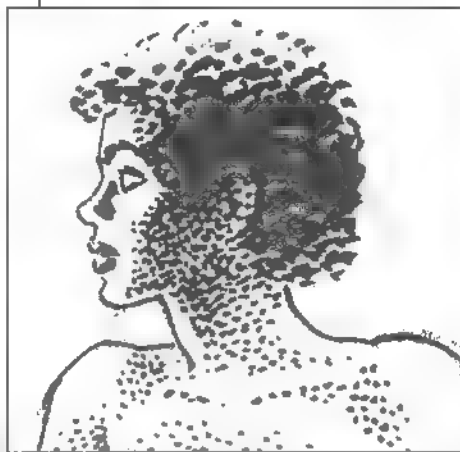
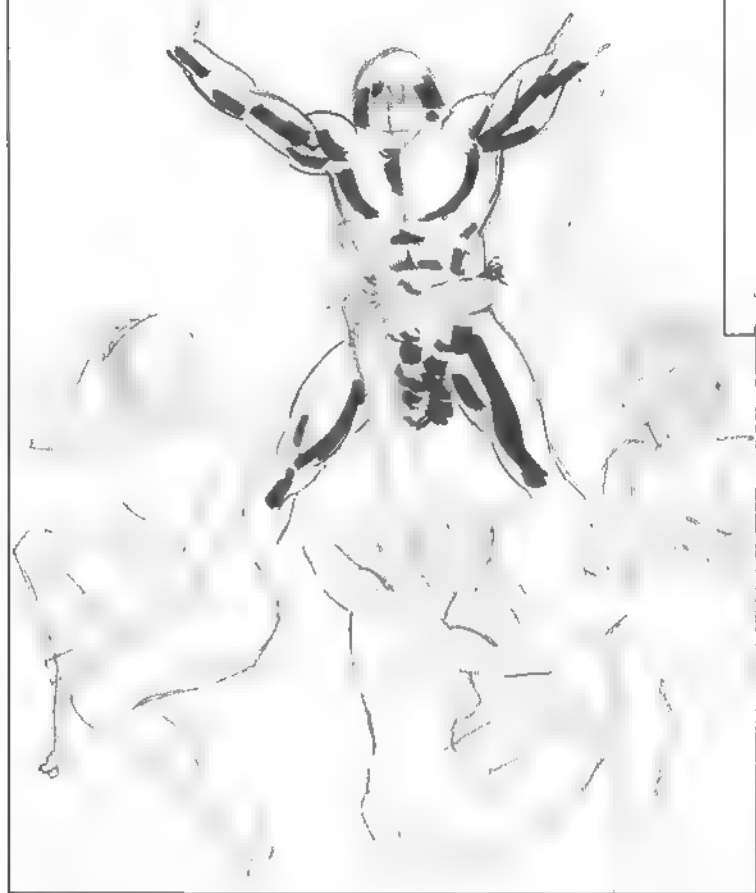
STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 3: Working in with his brush, Villagran spots in the heaviest blacks on Conan's figure. After this he finishes all the "contention lines" on the figures, finishing the drawing of the figures at this point with his brush, finishing the feet, faces,

ABOVE: Detail from one of the figures. Villagran starts stippling the forms out of the darkest areas, working from dark to light, keeping his stippling random, to avoid a stiff or mechanical effect.

penciler's style and my style.

DRAW!: I see. So on someone like Garcia López, whose pencils are very well drawn, very well finished, you try and just follow along?

RV: Yes, especially in his case, I ink almost without thinking, because he has such a good base of drawing. He also gave me a lot of liberty, but because I know Garcia López, I can guess what he wants, and he leaves something for me to do in the inks, according to my tastes.

DRAW!: Okay, so because he knows you, and how you work, he might leave certain things like textures up to you since he knows the way you work. And his drawing is so

solid, so flawless it must be easy to dress it up when you ink it

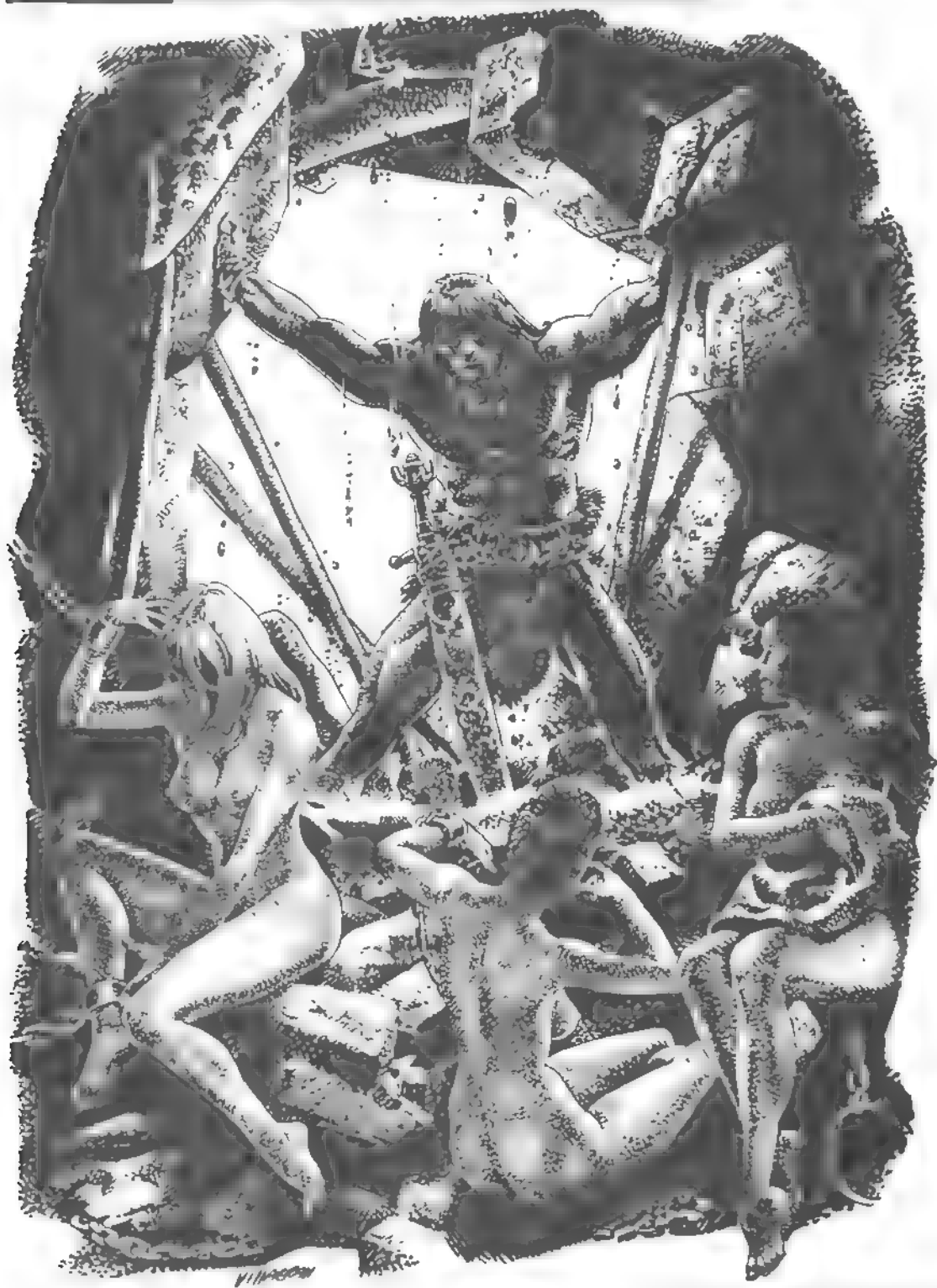
RV: Exactly. He can relax a little on the pencils.

DRAW!: Okay, in his case I can see how that would work. But I have seen you do work, say for DC, where all you got was layouts, very similar to what you have penciled here for yourself to ink. So then it's up to you to go in and add the shadows, textures, etc

RV: Yes, that's my decision. Sometimes the penciler will indicate a shadow or lighting that isn't good or consistent, and in that case I will not follow that. But I will try and think like the guy who is making the pencils. But sometimes I can't; the light is coming from the left at the top



STEP 4: Villagran finishes the figure of the highest contrasts first, Conan. Now working back and forth on all the figures, he balances the blacks. From here he proceeds to finish all the figures, then adds the background last.



of the drawing, and in the middle of the drawing he changes the direction of the light, and then it's coming from the right. So then I have to make a choice of which way to light the drawing.

DRAW!: So you try and unify the direction of the light source in the drawing.

RV: Exactly

DRAW!: So suddenly the lighting isn't consistent on the face and the body, so you have to unify the lighting with the inking.

RV: Exactly, because sometimes a penciler will use two or three light sources in the same panel, and then I have to decide what I will use

DRAW!: Now you use a brush to do most of your inking, correct?

RV: Yes, but I can use pen as well. I use the brush because I don't like changing back and forth between the two, because sometimes the pen lines dry too slow.

DRAW!: You mean if you are inking with too much pen it slows you down?

RV: Yes, and sometimes I end up staining the page.

DRAW!: Yes, the dreaded ink smear, always right on someone's face or a word balloon

RV: Exactly. I prefer using the brush because when I am working I can keep going on something, put it aside, do something else, and when I go back, it's dry. I work very fast.

DRAW!: Yes, you do. I've sat there in awe of you working like you are very calm, but the pages just add up! It's really amazing. What size brush do you like to use?



RV: A Winsor and Newton Sable No. 3. But I don't know what's happened. In Buenos Aires when I buy brushes, so many of them are damaged or in bad condition, I must choose the new plastic brushes.

DRAW!: Oh, you mean the synthetic kind?

ABOVE: A great example of Villagran combining inking techniques over the pencils of Richard Howell from an issue of *Deadbeats for Claypool*.

RV: Yes.

DRAW!: But you don't like those as much?

RV: No I don't, but I use them when I don't have any other alternative

DRAW!: Now we've know each other for a long time I

notice when you're working back in Buenos Aries, on your own work, you tend to work larger than the original art size here, which is basically 10"x15" Do you find working here in America, and working smaller to be more difficult?

RV: Sometimes if I'm working for Europe they also work smaller like here in the US; not as large as I used to work in Buenos Aries, but now they are working smaller there,

too. I don't alter my working methods too much. I try and work the same way. I don't think of how the work will look when it's reduced

DRAW!: So you are saying you are working for the original, not the reproduction?

RV: Yes.

DRAW!: Interesting, because most artists work the other way.

RV: Yes.

DRAW!: So then how did you develop this stipple technique, as opposed to the traditional inking techniques? The Alex Raymond, or classic comic style rendering; what you are doing is like a pointillism style—a stipple technique, like Virgil Finlay or someone It's a very different technique for mainstream comics. What led you to explore and develop this style? Is this something you always did?

RV: When I was a kid, I saw the work of an Italian artist whose work was very similar to this style.

LEFT: More of the stipple inking technique over pencils by Richard Howell. From the cover of *Deadbeats* #40.



DRAW!: Drawings done with this technique used to create a middle tone from the darks to the light, all done with these little points, like a gradation.

RV: Exactly. Because I'm really an illustrator foremost instead of a cartoonist, I don't pass directly from the dark to the light without indicating middle tones on something. Then I learned to do this technique. I was also a big fan of Gustave Dore, J.C. Coll, and many others.

DRAW!: Franklin Booth?

RV: Yes. They influenced me to create this style, which isn't only points but variation in lines as well.

DRAW!: Like an engraving.

RV: Yes. Sometimes using a line helps the points create more variation between the light and the shadow. Sometimes if I need only points I use only points, but sometimes I use lines as well to increase the texture and contrast.

DRAW!: Okay, when you start this technique—because I've seen you use this technique to ink Richard Howell's work, a traditional comic style—I would think that's a very different way to work over an artist, who didn't plan to have his work inked in this fashion. Because when you are doing this illustration here, for the demonstration, you know this is how you are going to finish the drawing. So let's say you are going to apply this technique on top of another style.

RV: I must think a little more. I must think about what the artist wanted to do, and what I want to do. In the case of Richard Howell I did this because his style sometimes looks like an old-fashioned style, and he likes this style, this technique. Other artists don't. So in Richard's case, the application of this style is easier.

In the case of Garcia López, whose work is very well finished, very well proportioned, very strong, I don't think it would work. Maybe I'm wrong.

DRAW!: Okay, so now when you've got your sketch done and you are going to start inking, where do you start first?

LEFT: Every barbarian's and fanboy's dream, or a castration nightmare? Another fantastic illustration featuring our favorite Cimmerian.





ABOVE: Another Conan illustration using the stipple technique.

BELOW: Warming up for Prince Valiant.

RV: I start with the principal figure, in this case Conan, using all his strength to keep the hole in the cave open. I start with the figure which will get all the attention. I start with the contention lines

DRAW!: What is a contention line?

RV: The contention line is the line that separates the

figures from the background. In this case—the body of Conan—there is no background behind his figure. It's pure light. It's very easy to do the contention line when you pass immediately from the dark to the light. But you have to be careful when the figure is light and the background is also light. The lines must be very fine. In this case the light is at the top of the drawing so the points are lighter at the top and heavier at the bottom. What really makes this drawing is the shadow. Now some impressionist artists say everything is light; in the case of this drawing, almost everything is the lack of light.

DRAW!: So what's next here?

RV: I make all the contention lines of the figures, to separate them from the background, sometimes indicating only the heaviest shadows first, no middle tones in this case. Sometimes I will finish a specific detail so I won't forget it later when I come back to it.

DRAW!: So when you are working, you tend to work all over the drawing, slowly pulling it together?

RV: Yes, exactly; and I don't outline the whole figure. I leave some of the figure or drawing to be indicated by tone as opposed to line, in the traditional comic style inking. If I finish this in line, or rely on the line to indicate the form—everything like this—I won't have to use tone to indicate it.



DRAW!: So you are saying that relying too much on line affects the indication of form in a very different way than using tone to turn the form or light the form?

RV: Yes. You can get lazy and indicate something in pure line and have parts of the drawing be inconsistent. You have to be careful not to use too much black or too much contrast in the beginning; otherwise you have to take a razor and remove it.

DRAW!: A razor?

RV: Yes, I use a razor blade instead of white-out, which I don't like. When I used to use it, with time it became yellow and dirty. So I prefer to use a razor. When I was young, I started using a razor to do this technique.

DRAW!: You mean like an etching or scratchboard?

RV: Yes. I learned to use these small steel points and to work on this type of board and this type of ink you can't

get anymore. It was covered with a gesso. I learned this from a very old German artist who worked this way with the steel point. He'd make this drawing on tracing paper, and this very heavy illustration board covered with gesso. He'd trace off his drawing on the board and then take the brail, the steel pencil, and start working on the drawing, scratching out the light tones from the black.

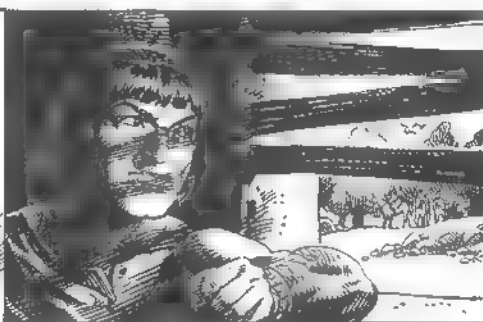
DRAW!: So you were drawn to this style from seeing this old German artist and from illustrators like Dore?

RV: Yes. I started working at an big art agency in Argentina called Kraft. They had the best illustrators in the republic: Two from Estonia, one from Germany, and they brought with them this technique for working.

DRAW!: So they taught this to you?

RV: No, but they let me watch them at work.

DRAW!: So you learned by watching them work?



RV: Exactly.

DRAW!: Did you ever do examples and have them critique them for you?

RV: Yes, and they were very nice and very kind to me. I was only 15 or 16 years old and they'd take the time to go over my work and show me where I went wrong. But sometimes they'd go on vacation and I'd get to do some work. The agency produced a magazine about Classical music, and they'd have to have the picture in there of certain composers, and the deadline was coming, so they'd give the work to me.

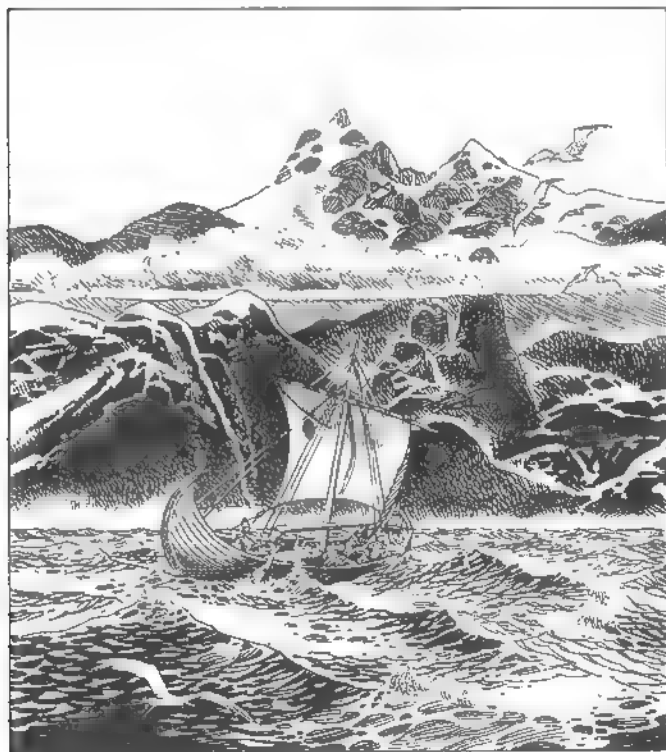
DRAW!: So this is when you started doing this style?

RV: Yes, but of course I was a kid and not as good as the regular artists. They were all much older men, in their 60s, maybe even older. And I could never find any mistakes

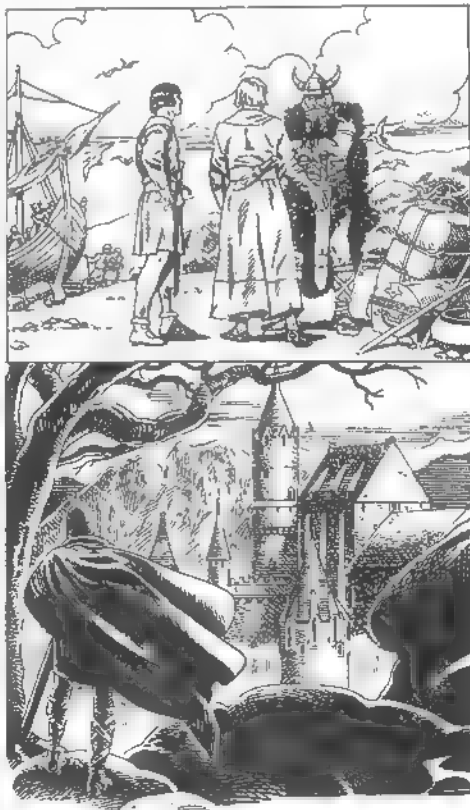
in their work. I would just go over and over it, studying it. And from studying their work, the work of Alex Raymond and Caniff, Foster and the great illustrators, I developed a very critical eye. There was a wide variety of good work and styles in those days. Now some kid might say they only like Mike Mignola or somebody, not even knowing about any illustrators, but I was aware of them as a kid. So my art, my style, was a mix of my influences

DRAW!: So you would try to learn from as many artists as you could

RV: Exactly. And I would clip out drawings by my favorite artists and save them to study. Coll, and all of these other illustrators, I had samples of their work, even if I didn't know their names at the time. I would buy *Post*, *Life*, all the great magazines of that time and when I'd see one of these illustrations by my favorite illustrators, I'd cut it out and save it. Remember *Reader's Digest*?



This sample and the one on the previous page is from Villagran's try-out for *Prince Valiant*, when he heard King Features was possibly looking for a replacement in case John Cullen Murphy chose to retire. Murphy decide to stay, but King said they liked Villagran's sample and would keep him in mind.






An excellent example of Villagran's inking over Garcia Lopez's pencils from *Atari Force* #3.



DRAW!: Yes. Tom Lovell, Austin Briggs, Noel Sickels, so many great illustrators did work for them. I bought several at a library sale and clipped out the art.

RV: Yes, I'd buy that because they had many, many good artists in there. And I'd also buy a magazine called *Beyond 2000*, because they had so many good artists in there as well. And I'd copy the drawings, or not necessarily the exact drawings, but the artist's style. I'd try and do a different drawing in the same style.

DRAW!: So you would use them as practice?

RV: Yes. Of course I'd try and try and never get it exactly. But I kept going, and that's how I taught myself, through constant practice, over and over again. One artist can learn from another. 

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in the small northern city of Corrientes, Argentina in 1938, Ricardo, a natural artist and oldest of three brothers and one sister, was already drawing by the early age of four. After finishing high school, he entered into the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires.

While still in school, Ricardo started accepting freelance work for various advertising companies, printers and comic publishers. He continued to take freelance assignments during his compulsory service in the Argentine Army.

After receiving his discharge from the military and returning to civilian life, Ricardo quickly put his full effort back into working as an illustrator. His list of clients grew to include most of the big advertising agencies and printing houses in Argentina. He quickly established himself as one of the top illustrators. In constant demand for his draftsmanship and speed, Ricardo spent several years accepting top commissions.

In 1969, Ricardo returned to the field of comics. He worked for Editorial Columba (Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Lima, Caracas, Asuncion, Montevideo, Santiago), Codex Ediciones, Guisa (Spain), Eura (Rome), and Fleetway (London). He illustrated numerous covers and stories covering every subject from barbarians, romance, and westerns to science fiction.

In 1970 Ricardo was elected the Vice President of the "Asociación de Dibujantes" and was co-creator of the "Asociación de Ilustradores" in Argentina. The ever-increasing demand for Ricardo's work led him in 1974 to open his own studio, Nipper Cuatro, with his two brothers Enrique and Carlos. At one time the studio grew to employ 20 artists and assistants, producing work for comic publishers in Argentina and Europe. Many of the famous and popular artists of the time and of today passed through its doors. Many young, up-and-coming artists received the knowledge and experience to go on to successful careers of their own, working under Ricardo's tutelage and easy manner.

In 1982, Ricardo came to the United States and established contacts in comics. He started working from Argentina for DC Comics, Marvel Comics, Archie Comics, Dark Horse Comics, and many others. He has attended and shown his work in many conventions in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Diego, and Detroit.

Ricardo's first love has always been painting. He has had several exhibitions of his work including Museo del Prado (Madrid), Municipal De Exhibiciones (Buenos Aires), Museo de Armas, Secretaria de Turismo, and many others.

Ricardo now splits his time between Philadelphia and Buenos Aires. He continues to accept illustration and comics assignments, but is now concentrating more on painting. He's currently preparing several pictures for future exhibitions. You can see more of Ricardo's art online at: www.actionplanet.com/creators/ricardo.html

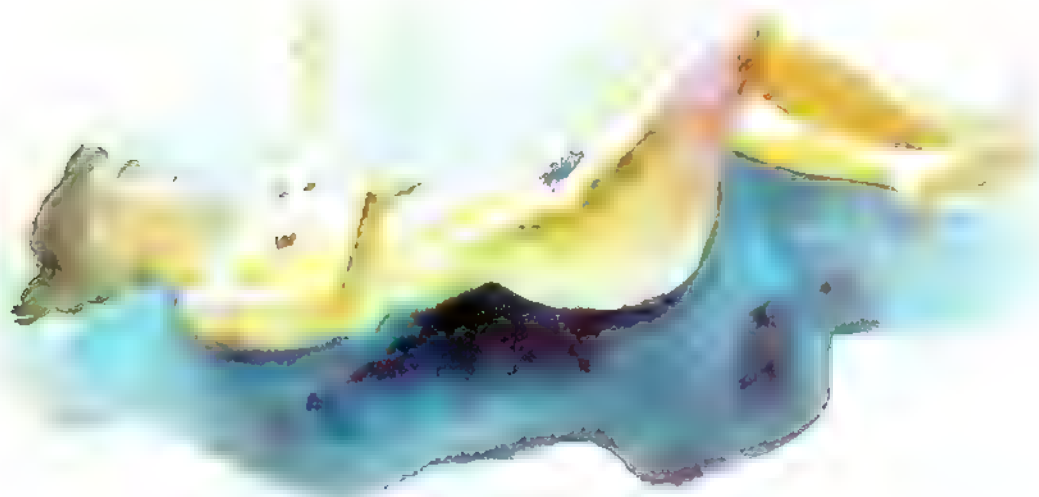
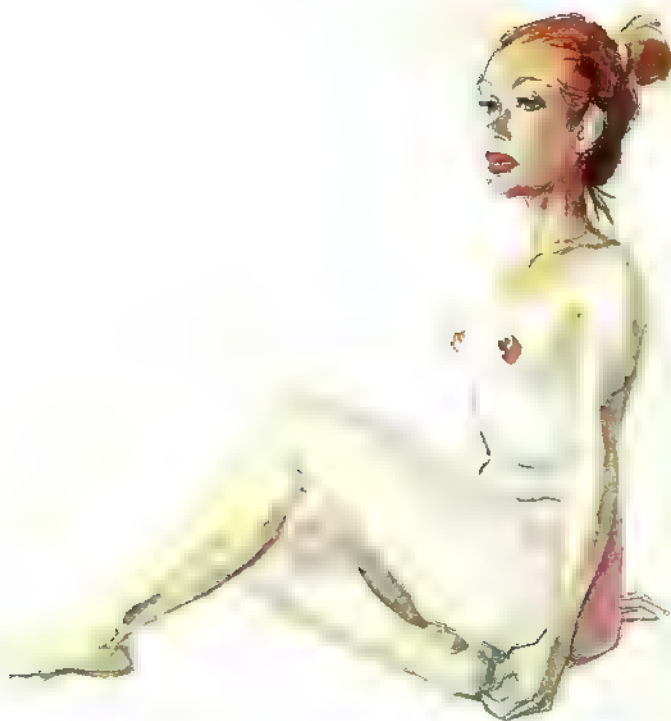
PAINTING FROM LIFE

**A PORTFOLIO OF WATERCOLOR AND MIXED MEDIA PAINTINGS
DONE FROM THE LIVE MODEL**

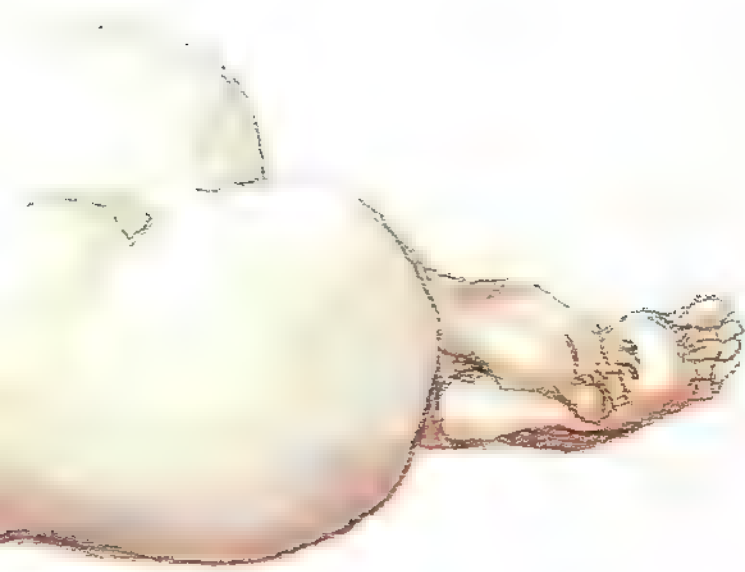
by Bret Blevins



















It is not often in this business when you get a widely diverse group of talented artisans to share a studio together. The men of Channel 13 are just that. Diverse and talented. Seasoned pros covering the fields of comics, animation and illustration, these guys can do it all. Channel 13 is weathering the current savage "dot.bomb" environment, where just a year ago new websites and entertainment-destination sites sprung up daily, funded by what seemed like an almost bottomless amount of VC money, as everyone in Hollywood ran the "goldrush" dash to internet fortune. Now cyber-space is strewn with million dollar failures and pink slips. Despite the current condition of the industry, Channel 13 has a deal to produce their own series *Swing Town*.

Through a deal with WildBrain, a premier animation studio in the heart of the San Francisco Bay Area, Channel 13 has a deal to produce 12 episodes of their web cartoon *Swing Town* for WildBrain's own site, wildbrain.com, a featured provider of animation content for Yahoo!Broadcast. *DRAW!* tuned into Channel 13 to get the low-down on navigating the turbulent internet marketplace, and just how one goes about producing a web cartoon. Nestled in the Richmond District of San Francisco, Channel 13 is comprised of Kieron Dwyer, Rick Remender and John Estes.

His involvement in *Swing Town* is a first stab at animation for comics veteran Kieron Dwyer, who began

his career with a 2-year stint as penciler on Marvel Comics' *Captain America*. Kieron quickly became a fan favorite, and in his 14 years as a professional artist, he has served as penciler, inker, painter, etc. for nearly every comics publisher on many popular titles, including *Superman*, *Batman*, *Lobo*, *X-Men*, *Fantastic Four* and the critically acclaimed mini-series *Superman: The Dark Side*. In recent years, Dwyer has turned his attention to several creator-owned projects, including *Black Heart Billy* (his first collaboration with Remender) and his own *LCD*. *Lowest Comic Denominator*, a compendium of lowbrow adult humor which has built a steadily growing core of devotees. Dwyer also built and manages his own website at LCDcomic.com.

John Estes graduated from the Academy of Art college in San Francisco in 1991, with a Bachelor's degree in illustration. He has since worked primarily within the publishing industry, illustrating several high profile Graphic Novels for Marvel and DC Comics, as well as cover images for magazines and books. In addition to the development of children's books and animation, he has also provided conceptual design and storyboards for multimedia. Through his work in comics, Estes has gained a strong fan following, leading to personal appearances throughout the United States and Europe, where his original artwork has been sought out by private collectors.

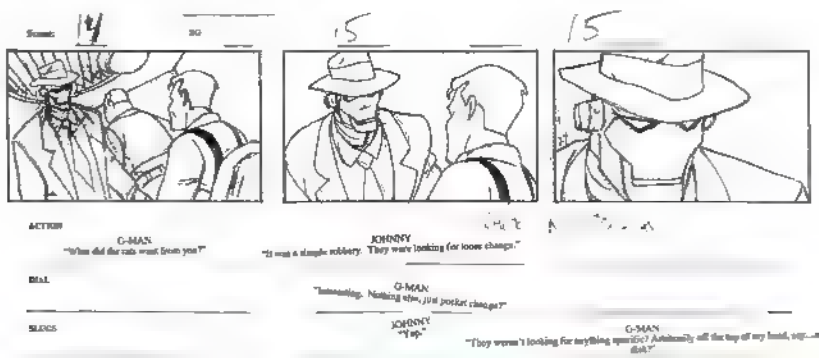
Rick Remender, the animator of the group, has produced his own comic books *Captain Dingleberry* and *Black Heart Billy* with friends Harper Jaten and Kieron Dwyer as well as having served as an animator on *The Iron Giant*. He began his career in 1995 when he joined Don Bluth's team of animators on the feature *Anastasia*.

He stayed at Fox Animation for 3 years also working on *Bartok* and *Titan A.E.* Over the next few years he served as animator on other features such as *Rocky and Bullwinkle* as well as doing commercial animation for the Jolly Green Giant and Willy Wonka. It was during this time he began teaching Animation and Storyboarding at the Academy of Art college in San Francisco. He has also done album covers and graphic design for some of the largest punk labels in the world including Fat Wreck Chords.

In addition to the three partners, Channel 13 has benefited from the work of many talented folks. Eric Pierce is the 3-D guru, having built many of the environments and cars for *Swing Town* in 3D Studio Max and exporting

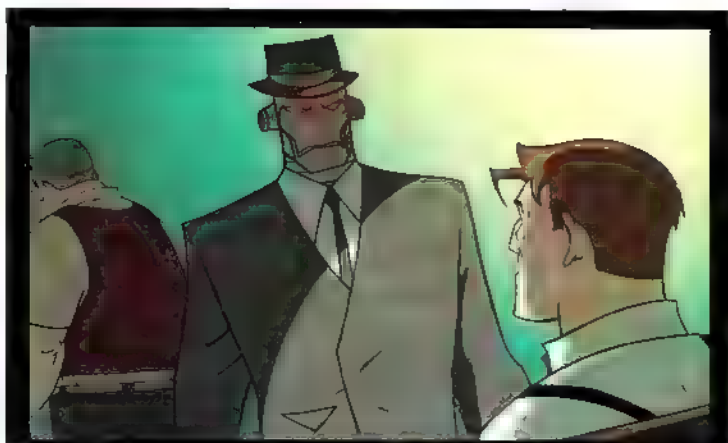
them into Flash through a Vecta3D plug-in. He's also been a consistent help in figuring out problems in Flash and optimizing the episodes to reduce file size without sacrificing the look of the show. Elise Remender has done an excellent job with coloring, taking John's lead on color palettes, and giving the show its signature look. Fellow comics pros Brandon McKinney and Jeff Johnson have lent their considerable talents to storyboards on several episodes, and led by Sean Worsham, a small team of volunteers from the SF-based Academy of Art college has done a bang-up job on animation clean-ups, in-betweens, *et al.* John's cousin Evan Brock is their sound designer. In general, Channel 13 is a real home-grown, family-and-friends kind of company.

DRAW!: I've known Kieron for a few years but can you give us a little backstory on the forming of Channel 13, and why you decided to group together; how long you've been together, and what direction and place you see Channel 13 occupying?



TOP: Storyboards for the episode 4 interrogation scene between G-Man, Jackknife, and sleazy police Detective Burman. Boards by Jeff Johnson.

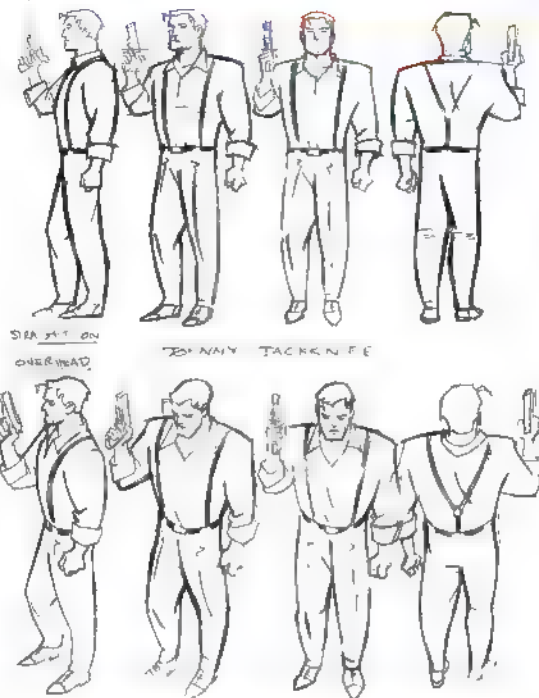
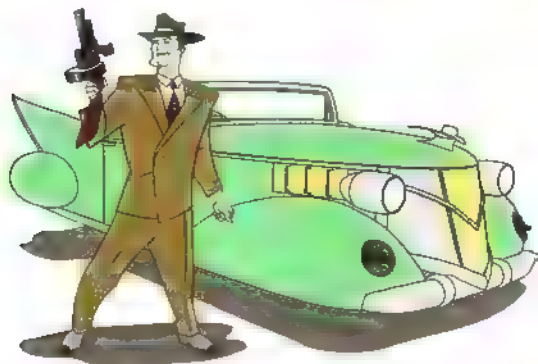
RIGHT: Still from the eventual scene. Keys by Dwyer, cleanups and in-betweens by Remender, color by Estes.



Channel 13: It started back in the Spring of 1999. We'd all been killing ourselves on projects in the slumping comic book industry. John had been doing covers and prints, and Kieron and Rick were doing their individual books, *LCD* and *Captain Dingleberry*, as well as *Black Heart Billy*, a collaboration between the two. We were all basically freelancers, paying the bills but not exactly swimming in the cash fountain. Rick was living in Phoenix at the time and had come to San Francisco to house-sit for Kieron, and in the process, he lined up a gig working at local animation house WildBrain. John Estes called one day and started shooting the bull with Rick about putting together a web cartoon company. John and Kieron had already been tossing the idea around, and with their comic connections and Rick's animation connections, we figured we could pull it off.

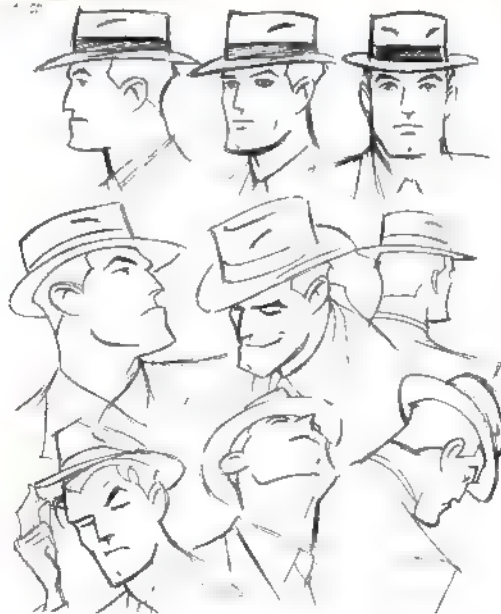
Freelancing is a tough road with little security. We all knew that comic books were taking a huge dive and that web animation was an expanding field. Even with the recent failure of some big web animation companies we still believe that content will drive things and we think we can navigate this course successfully, especially if we line up some commercial work to supplement the web work. In fact, we consider ourselves more of an all-purpose graphic arts/illustration/animation company than simply a web animation company. Web animation just happened to be what we got funding to do first.

BELOW: Color style guide for Johnny and his flying car, the *Maltese Falcon*. Jackknife designed by Dwyer. Car designed by Estes and modeled in 3-D by Eric Pierce, colored by Estes.



ABOVE: The model sheet by Dwyer for Johnny Jackknife.

BELOW: Another model sheet by Dwyer showing the model turns and expressions for Johnny Jackknife.





Style guides for some of the colorful characters in *Swing Town*: G-Man, Dollface, and Scurvy of the nefarious Rat Pack. Designs by Dwyer and Remender, colored by Estes.

DRAW!: I know you all came mostly from a comics background, John came from an illustration background and Rick from animation. When you formed Channel 13, and started shopping your idea around, how did you develop the ideas? Committee sessions? Alone, then run it past the other members?

Channel 13: We all had projects we had already developed in one form or another. We took those and built upon them. We also came up with several new properties as a group and got to work drawing them and writing pitches for them. But, ironically enough, it really all began with *Swing Town*. Prior to our discussions with WildBrain, Rick had already written what became episodes one and two with plans to collaborate on another comic book project with Kieron. Rick wanted to do a stylistic retro-future story with classic flying cars and a tough talking detective.

Kieron had a character he used to draw in his high school sketchbooks with the name of Johnny Jackknife, a

'40s era private eye thrust into the future. The two ideas dovetailed perfectly, and when we told John Estes about it, he got excited and threw in some great ideas. We knew it could make a great comic book, but we really wanted to do it animated, so we developed it with the web in mind. We knew it was an ambitious project, but we really wanted to see a cool action-adventure serial on the web, and we wanted to be the ones who made it.

The three of us spent an entire week sequestered in our studio day and night, putting together a pitch book of about 12 properties, including *Swing Town*. Rick was working at WildBrain at the time on the *Rocky and Bullwinkle* feature and mentioned what we were doing to his production manager Michael Baker. Michael helped set up a meeting for us with the heads of the studio. We were also in talks with Mondo to do a *Black Heart Billy* cartoon at the time, and another local company was also interested in some of our ideas, so things were looking good. Our first meeting with WildBrain went very well, and they came back with an offer to purchase three of our



properties: *Swing Town*, *Dot*, and *Black Heart Billy*.

Kieron and Rick realized that they were too attached to *BHB* to sell the rights, so we declined on the *BHB* offer. However, we did sell them *Swing Town* and *Dot* outright with a 12-episode promise on each. We weren't thrilled selling the full rights to what we feel are strong ideas, but with 12 episodes guaranteed on each, we dealt with the loss. At least we knew we'd be working for a good year or more on our own stuff, and we'd make the seed money for our business so any further deals we make will be gravy.

DRAW!: How did you develop the pitch to present it to WildBrain? Sketches? Loose, tight? How fleshed out was the concept? Just drawings? Had you ever pitched anything before?

Channel 13: We've all pitched things to different comics companies and movie studios. There is an art to it. Most important, though, is to be confident. Know your properties inside and out, and make sure you believe what you say, so the folks you pitch to will believe it, even if it's total B.S.

The Channel 13 pitch book was clean and put together in a very professional manner. We included fully inked and colored images of the characters as well as slick designed logos and mastheads. We had a one sheet for each property outlining the characters and some possible plot lines. It was very tight. We left nothing to the imagination. Based on the responses we got from every company we sent the packet to, we accomplished our goal. Every company was interested in at least two of the concepts. WildBrain was the first to put money on the table and get us a contract. We decided to hop the train in the station, rather than wait for another, and we feel that we made the best choice. They've been great to us

DRAW!: Did this require you to learn new things, new programs? How familiar were any of you with the internet?

Channel 13: We are all familiar with the 'net and web cartoons, and we're always looking for something really cool to come out. Unfortunately, there hasn't been much done in Flash that seems worth mentioning, at least cartoon-wise.

John Kricfalusi's stuff looks great, of course, and RenegadeCartoons.com, Mishmashmedia.com, and Jinxstudio.com have also done some really cool, innovative stuff. MondoMedia turns out quality goods. We were all disappointed that Scott Morse's *Volcanic Revolver* (for Thrive.com) never aired; the trailer looked great. Icebox.com had everyone beat in terms of sheer volume, but so much of the visual side was really cheap looking. You could tell that only the smallest percentage of the 15 million dollars they burned through was going to the animators. Like anybody else, WildBrain's site is hit and miss, but we really dig *Joe Paradise* and *Glue* in particular.



Rough keys of various Rat Pack members. Just like regular 2-D animation, nearly all scenes for *Swing Town* are rendered on paper first, then scanned and colored in Flash. Top by Remender, bottom by Dwyer.

We had to go through quite a learning curve with Flash. Kieron and Rick had a bit of experience with the program, but not much. Rick had to unlearn a lot of what he knew from feature animation. This is a different beast. In the beginning, John was doing every background by hand. Every shot. Every cut. That's a huge amount of work, and there are too many other tasks that need doing to have anybody stuck on any one job for too long. Now John

Channel 13: We had to buy about \$10,000 worth of stuff. Computers, animation desks, sound programs, the essentials. It's a huge leap of faith and commitment to sink that kind of money into a startup, especially for guys who've always worked for other people. It's scary, but we think it's worth it.

DRAW!: Once you had WildBrain interested, did you already have representation or did you have to seek it out?

Channel 13: At the time we entered negotiations with WildBrain, Kieron and Rick were doing *Black Heart Billy* with publisher Slave Labor Graphics, who were represented by Animamagnet agent Bruce Berman. He also represents our friend Shannon Wheeler (*Too Much Coffee Man*). When Bruce contacted us about someone interested in *BHB*, we mentioned what we were doing with WildBrain, and the rest is history. We signed on with Animamagnet.

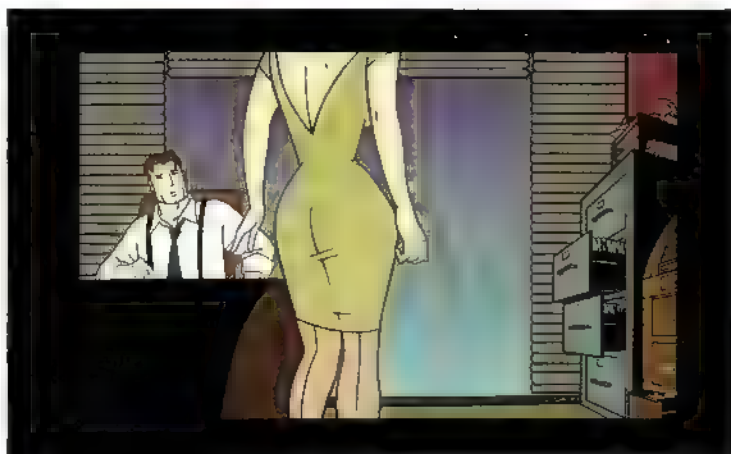


The seduction scene from episode 3. When a beautiful mysterious woman comes to him for help, Jackknife is drawn into the case around which the first series of *Swing Town* is built.

designs the environments and our 3-D guy Eric Pierce builds them in 3-D. We then cut them and vectorize them. If we need to register 2-D characters to the 3-D elements, we just print out the 3-D backgrounds and use that as a guide for the 2-D.

DRAW!: What was the expense involved?

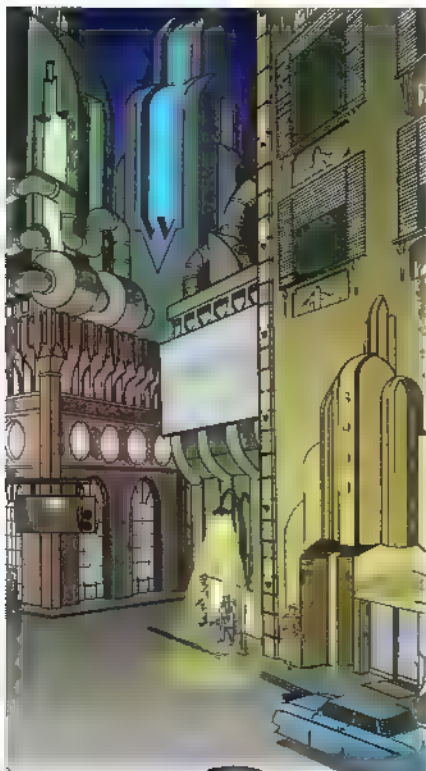
Keys by Dwyer, cleanups and in-betweens by Remender and Sean Worsham, color by Estes.



DRAW!: Okay, now getting started: How did you work out your production, schedules, division of labor, etc.? Who did what? Art-wise, what are the steps involved. I know most of us are familiar or have even done storyboards for animation and advertising, but walk us through the steps: Roughs, finish, layout, Photoshop, Flash animating, etc.

Channel 13: It's morphed a bit, so we all do a little bit of everything, as opposed to having specific areas of responsibility from which we never stray. We don't have somebody outside our triangle serving as an impartial production manager, which would definitely be more efficient, so sometimes things can get a bit confusing. Ultimately, though, everyone involved feels like they had real input into the total product, which is good

As for the process, we started by writing a basic plot. The three of us spent a good week plotting and doing model sheets and character designs. Once we had solid model sheets and scripts we gave the first two episodes to comics luminary Jeff Johnson to storyboard. While he boarded the first two episodes we went ahead and finished more pre-production work.




LEFT: Street level Swing Town, a retro-future city full of strange characters. Design by Estes, color by Estes and Elise Remender. **ABOVE:** A nightmarish character from episode 5, when Jackknife finds himself in the very dangerous lair of Big Top, one of Swing Town's major crime bosses. This killer clown puppet emerges from Big Top's hat to cut up more than the carpet as various Rat Packers observe. Clown scene keys by Dwyer, cleanups and in-betweens by Remender. Rat Pack scene keyed and in-betweened by Remender.

Eric Pierce took Kieron's flying car designs and John's environments and built them in 3-D Studio Max. John got to work on the backgrounds with Rick's sister Elise following behind him on digital ink and paint, coloring scenes under John's direction.

The 2-D stuff is run pretty much the same way it's done in feature films or TV animation, the primary difference being that feature uses 24 frames-per-second. Web animation works at 12 frames a second, so it limits what you can do. It does make for less work, however, and there are a lot of shortcuts and helpers in Flash, especially with motion 'tweens and such. With our current production schedule, it's vital to cut corners and time whenever we can.

Kieron will take whatever character designs we all do and streamline them into a house style. Kieron and Rick will then start to animate, splitting up the key animation sequences. The major key drawings are done first as roughs in blue pencil. They are then cleaned up tight with an HB pencil and the animation is timed out. Next in the process, the keys are broken down, adding drawings between the keys. Then the scene is in-betweened, adding more drawings between the breakdowns. The more drawings you add between keys the slower and smoother the motion will be. Once the animation of the characters is done Rick takes it and adds whatever sfx animation it needs, if any: Moving shadows, smoke, cast shadows, etc. This was his specialty at Fox, and we always keep an eye out for cool effects to add. Then all the components are scanned, streamlined, and put into Flash. We record the vocals here in our studio and our sound guy Evan Brock does his magic with them, adding effects and designing the sound for each episode. Finally, the sound is put in and the Flash animating is done, including lip syncing.

Last, we deliver the episodes to WildBrain, where they celebrate our genius with whores and champagne. *Vivé le Channel 13!* 

TOP: Before and after color is added. The color palette of *Swing Town* is one of its many distinctions, setting and aiding the overall tone of the series.

LOWER: *Swing Town* poster made by WildBrain, using the original presentation packet art of Johnny Jackknife, Dollface, and the Maltese Falcon. Pencils by Estes, inks by Dwyer, color by Dwyer and John Heebink. Poster design by WildBrain.



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AVENGERS ASSEMBLED!

AN INTERVIEW WITH JERRY ORDWAY



AVENGERS DOMINATION FACTOR #3 MONTHLY MARVEL COMICS
 WRITER JERRY ORDWAY EDITOR TOM BRADY
 MARVEL COMICS
 UPC 000000

Long one of the comics field's few triple threats, Jerry Ordway can do it all: Penciler, inker and writer. From his hallmark work on *Superman* to *Shazam*, to his creator-owned projects *Wildstar* and *The Messenger*, Ordway's outstanding draftsmanship, crisp inking and clear solid storytelling has set a benchmark of excellence.

Former *Power of Shazam!* inker and *DRAW!* editor Mike Manley catches up with Da' Ordster fresh from his gig on the *Avengers* and just as he's about to start work on his next book for Marvel Comics, *USAgent*, and gets Jerry to reveal some of his working methodologies and techniques.

DRAW!: Since you often do both writing and drawing, how does it affect your process working from your own plot versus working with another writer's?

JO: Well, I always start with a pretty tight plot, even if I'm the writer. You might think I'd get to skip that step, and jump right into thumbnail breakdowns, but if Marvel

or DC are paying you to write, they want to see a plot regardless. If I am working my own story, I will better know the amount of space I need for copy, first and foremost. Some writers I work with are more wordy than others, and if you don't want to see important bits of story information covered up by dialogue, then you have to leave lots of room for copy.

In many ways I find it easier to design “fun” pages when working from someone else’s plot than my own. I can be more objective about what fits in, and what to leave out. On the recent *Maximum Security* miniseries I drew for Marvel Comics, I found Kurt Busiek’s plots to be simple and to the point—very easy to translate into art. This is not the case with many other writers, who pack each plot-page with so much material that you’d need 12 panels to fit it all in. Comics are first and foremost a visual medium, and I think too many panels page after page becomes tedious.

DRAW!: Do you approach it any differently writing or plotting for yourself than you would if you were plotting for another artist, say like Pete Krause on *Shazam*? This is a very important stage since the amount of information you give to someone else is different than what you'd

FOOTNOTES OF SUBJECT "33/71" FOR 22 PAGES/QUESTIONS/10-27/2021-22

PAGE 21:

Here, we see several cargo-lifted helicopters arrive and land, with "Nuclear Regulatory Department" logos on them. Technicians in radiation suits, armed with radiation sensors of their design, start combing the area, and then one talks to a still stunned Cap. "The air and the ground are CLEAN--no residual radiation! But we SAW what appeared to be a NUCLEAR explosion. What gives?" Cap turns to Bob, "YOU did this, didn't you? You couldn't SAVE the people, but that talisman of yours somehow CONVERTED the radiation!" Bob, still weak, haltingly supported by Mary, says, "N ONLY I could have done MORE..." Last panel, the technician puts a supportive hand on Bob's shoulder, and says, seriously, "I [REDACTED] HOW in God's name you did THAT! Friend, but you saved MILLIONS of people in the surrounding hundred-mile-radius, from all the [REDACTED]!"

PAGE 22.

On to a close-up of Steel, face in moody shadows, as he also tells him about the battle in Fairhell. Aldo says, "Hister Atom was destroyed in the explosion, but he's still coming out of the dust and darkness, but the Marvels still live." Steel says, "Doesn't matter. We've HURT them both—we hit their hearts. They LIVE—or lived." Max's, also looks concerned, as he says, "The BACKSLASH from this—you can't just drop an ATOM BOMB on a town and say oops." Steel, mischievous, says, "Oops." Then, in as broad a scene as you're capable of both Steel and the aide roar their heads back, hold their bellies, and LAUGH Really BIG, and exaggerated. Then move in closer to Steel's ear, and then closer still, and finally INSIDE, where we see Mr. Mind inside! To be continued.



20 PMS
A LITTLE
BETTER
ONLY 2

ABOVE: This is an example of the small breakdowns Ordway would draw on the scripts for Pete Krause when they worked together on the *Power of Shazam!*
RIGHT: The final page penciled by Krause and inked by Dick Giordano.

need yourself.

JO: That's true, but again, regardless of who's drawing a given plot, the companies want the plot to be complete, which is a good thing. When plotting for someone else, I try to be very clear and concise in my descriptions, and sometimes will supply a sketch or reference for something specific. Working with Pete Krause was easy, because he could draw anything I asked for, really. If I asked for a bank vault drawn on a page, I knew he'd draw a convincing one. Surprisingly, many working artists don't have that facility. In some extreme cases, on *Shazam*, I would have a very strong idea of how I saw the pages laid out, and would doodle a rough sketch to accompany the plot. Pete was free to interpret it as he saw fit, but it helped me to put it down visually, to make sure the actions fit into the page, and also to get it out of my system.





ABOVE:
Superman and
Captain Marvel
duke it out above
Fawcett City in this
beautiful example
of Ordway's solid
penciling from *The
Power of Shazam!*

DRAW!: How do you go about laying out a book? Do you make full-size roughs print-size using an Artograph to project it up, or do you just leap in right on the final board? Are your layouts in pencil or inked? Very tight or loose, leaving some decisions to be made later in the final penciling stage? I've seen some guys do work so tight in this stage they could print from it. I think that this is the most important part of the job since all the storytelling, all the staging, shot flow and visual dynamics and composition is established here. How do you try and keep the spontaneity in your work if you are tracing off layouts, as often a traced drawing will lose the juice, the energy of the sketch? Do you have any sort of general rules of storytelling and composition? Emotional or technical? For instance, like action shots must be a medium shot, exposition must be a medium close-up? Arrangement or variety of shots to keep the page exciting, like the way Gil Kane did with down-shots, next to up-shots? Do you break it down to simple shapes, or are you more concerned with having a good drawing over some tricky layout dynamic?

JO: With most jobs, I start by doodling out the job, page by page, very roughly and very tiny, in the left or right margin of the plot. I try to figure out the number of panels, and how to stage the action as needed. This step is really

less about the visuals than the mechanics of getting the correct information on the page. My priority is to tell the story, and I want to insure that I will tell it clearly.

The next step varies. For a long while, I would draw a tight marker layout, 6"x4" and enlarge this on a copy machine up to roughly 10"x15", and finally trace it off onto a sheet of 2-ply kid finish bristol board using a lightbox. As you mentioned in your question, you run the risk of losing the energy of the sketch this way, but it also helps me to fine-tune my proportions and balloon space. The big attraction to working this way is that the tight comp takes on a different look when it's enlarged. Sometimes drawing action poses and complicated perspective shots is easier at a much smaller size.

I have also drawn many, many comics just going from my scribbles right onto the board, first by ruling off the panel borders in pencil, and then very lightly sketching in the layout with a 2H or 4H pencil lead. Once I'm satisfied with this stage, I use a kneaded eraser to pick up some of the excess graphite from the page, to lighten up my construction lines even more. Then, using an F or B pencil lead in my mechanical pencil, I "find" the drawing in the construction lines, and render it. By dabbing up the sketchy stuff, the finished pencil page looks much cleaner, which is important at the inking stage. I don't have any tricks for laying out a page, except to keep in mind I'm telling a story, first and foremost. I will try to vary my shots, so that I don't repeat a panel layout on the same page, or have two headshots of roughly the same size on a page.

Sometimes I will fall back on techniques I learned in film class, when I was in high school: An *up* angle will make someone look powerful and imposing—a *down* angle makes them weak or insignificant. Figures in my pages should be acting, not just standing around. It adds interest to a character to have them gesturing, or holding a prop, or interacting with the background. Are they sitting, or leaning on a chair? If a character is written to be imposing and vulgar, then you can enhance the writing by visually bringing this across. I also like to make my figures visually distinctive, if at all possible.

Yet another way I have worked, when writing as well as drawing, is to go from the plot and thumbnail scribble stage to the boards, drawing panel shapes and very loose figure placements. Next, I would use these as a guide to write the dialogue on my computer, and then send it in to the office to have it lettered. Then I would get these back with the captions and balloons fully lettered, to finish up. The advantage of this system is that I could achieve a better flow with the scripting, by doing it in 11-page batches, and also I didn't have to waste time rendering where balloons would cover up the drawing they were already on the boards!

DRAW!: I know to a certain extent for artists at the top of their game, like you, this becomes instinct at times, you are not even conscious of why you do something, it just feels right. But I guess what I'm asking is do you use any formula to go over the work at this stage and adjust the layouts based on any sort of "Jerry Ordway's 22 Panels That Always Work," like Wally Wood's famous "22 Panels That Always Work"?

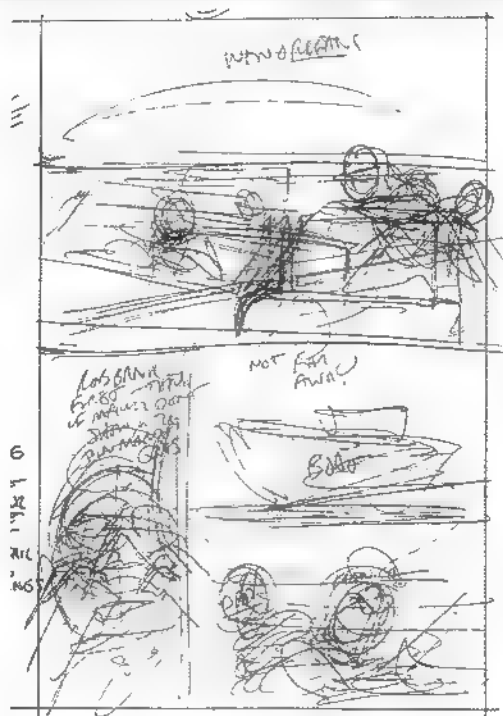
FAX TO TOM BREVOORT, MARVEL COMICS & PUBLISHING
7 PAGES
TOTAL

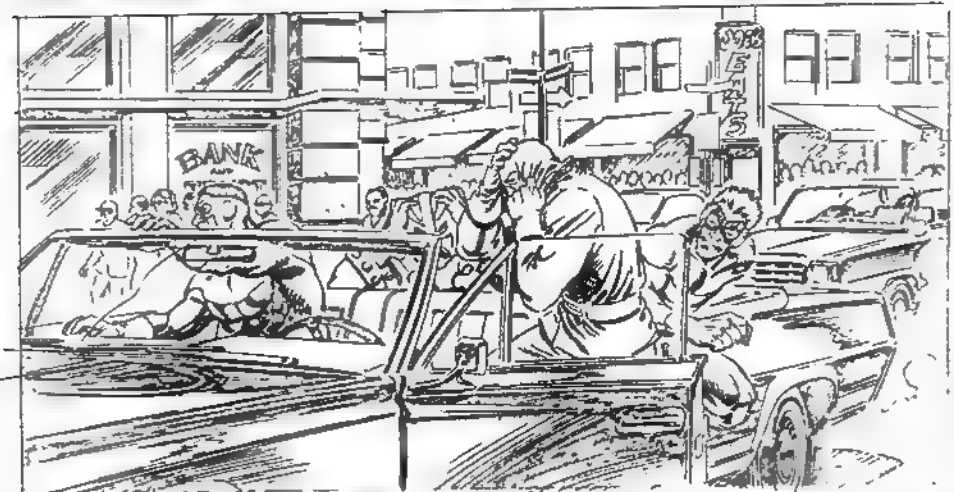
WRECKERS #16 "Mistaken ID" Plot by Jerry Ordway/ 1203335-1663/11-30/page 1
L.L.S.
PAGE 1
"Mistaken Identity"
Splash page, two panels: first, we see the Wrecking Crew being teleported into a spartan looking bunker, deep beneath NYC. They look disoriented, and yet angry at the same time. Bottom panel, we see a massive silhouette with eyes glowing. "Welcome gentlemen. I have need of your special services, for which you will be paid, handsomely."

PAGE 2-3. Here, we see the Wrecking crew spring into action against the still shadowed figure. Piledriver and Bulldozer charge, while Wrecker leans over to heave, from the teleport-jump. Thunderball holds a hand up to stop his teammates, "Wait-- he said he was going to PAY! A tachyon blast" scatters the two, as the Wrecker raise his crowbar defiantly, "Don't like my guts all twisted, friend, but if yer payin' in good old US greenbacks, we'll listen." A robotic hand holds the small Gameboy-like device out to the wrecker, saying, "I'm not hiring you for your intelligence, but rather for your muscle. I want you to find Ms. Marvel for me."

PAGE 4: The crew look at each other puzzled, like "Who?" Then Wrecker says "Wait-- I know who ya mean-- it's a dame, right? I fought her once, when she was an Avenger!" Shadow guy says, "My point of reference is a bit dated, as I was until very recently OFFLINE." Piledriver says, "Yeah, my nephew's all over that INTERNET place. Me, I figure someday " Wrecker slaps him upside the head, "Yeah, yeah-- we don't need to exchange life-stories here. We'll find the dame, but it'll cost ya fifty grand, PLUS travel expenses!" Shadow says, "I will pay seventy-five thousand, and as for TRAVEL take this tracking device. When you've found Ms. Marvel, trigger it, and I will teleport her here." Wrecker swats the device out of the metal hand, saying, "I don't LIKE teleportin', mister! My crew and me will get it done without that doohickey!" Thunderball picks up the device, and says to Wrecker, "Okay-- then HOW do you propose we get out of HERE, wherever HERE is?" Wrecker looks pained, as he answers, "Just give me a moment with my stomach, okay? --uhp--" Somewhere here, Piledriver and bulldozer wonder why he needs them, who he can teleport? Shh, says one-- I'm spending that dough already! They zap out of panel.

ABOVE: The plot written by Ordway, which he faxes into Marvel for approval by editor Tom Brevoort.
BELOW: Ordway's thumbnail for page 4.





ABOVE: Ordway's final pencils and inks on the cityscape.

JO: I pretty much do it instinctively at this point, after 20 plus years. I put together a pleasing variety of panels to communicate the actions of the plot. Again, it all comes down to the needs of the story, but as I touched upon before, there are some “no-nos” I avoid. Unless you’re trying for a specific effect, you don’t repeat panel layouts on a given page. You don’t do similar sized head shots more than once a page. I also try to establish where the scene is taking place right away, whether it be an exterior shot, or just a clear shot of a room that the characters are inhabiting. Anything you as the artist can do visually helps the story along.

DRAW!: I think the job can succeed or fail here at this stage. Despite all the nice drawing and rendering, if something is off at this stage, the emotional flow of a job can be lost and the reader led down the wrong path. They may not have the proper emotional response to the work, or may even become confused.

JO: Well, this is why we start with rough layouts. I’ve always used the theory that you should be able to follow the story without dialogue. The artist gets to stage the story—that’s a great responsibility. You have to use your little tricks to squeeze drama out of those drawings or they may as well be posters or pin-ups. I have scripted other artists’ work that was more decorative than narrative, and it can be done; it’s just that it doesn’t tap into the strength of comics—the marriage of words and pictures

DRAW!: Do you lay it all out at once or work in chunks? I know you mentioned in our initial conversation that on the current work you are doing for Marvel, you were laying stuff out rather loose, then scripting the story, then sending it off to the letterer, then really getting into the art when the pages came back lettered. Is this typical? I know in the old days the lettering sometimes would be done first and then the drawing, inking, etc.

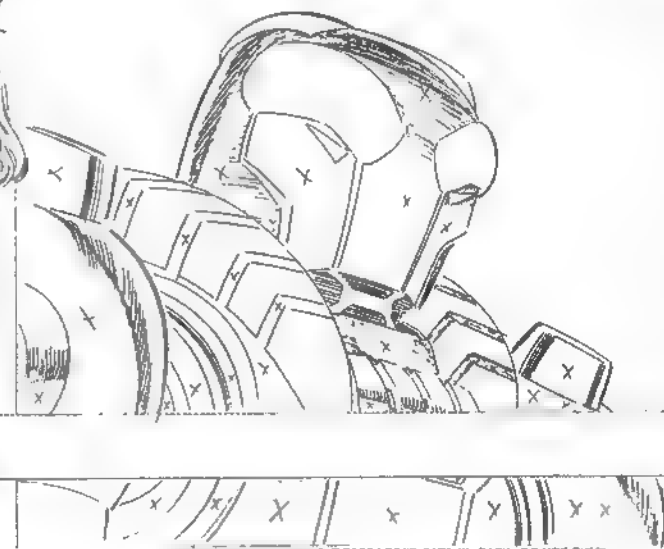
JO: I usually work in sequences. What I mean is that there are usually scene breaks or scene changes in any given story. If an opening sequence is five pages before a scene change, then I will break down those five pages in a chunk. In my current project, a *USAgent* mini-series from Marvel, the opening sequence runs halfway through the book, so I did that as a unit of 11 pages, and then scripted it as well. As for how common it is to work that way with



ABOVE: A page layout that Ordway would draw, then enlarge and tighten up on the final page using a lightbox. Ordway said he was just coming from a long stretch at DC Comics and felt a bit nervous stepping in to such a big project as a writer and artist.

layouts and lettering, I would guess it's not very common, nowadays especially, where most lettering is done on computer as a file. There are tremendous advantages to computer lettering, but to me having the words on the page makes it easier. If you're the inker, you have the advantage of reading the work to help clarify the story. If dialogue refers to a person's flaming red hair, that's a visual cue for the inker when rendering the character's hair, you know? I always hated inking stories that weren't lettered on the boards, unless I was able to get a copy of the writer's plot or script to go with the pencils.

ALL BLEED ART MUST EXTEND TO SOLID LINE UP
 Book THE AVENGERS Issue #16 Story Page 1 Line Up Page 1
 LETTERING INSIDE
 BROKEN LINE BOX



ABOVE: The finished pencils.

DRAW!: How much is the editorial side involved here?

JO: My favorite editors to work with will tell me if I've missed something in my story, but won't nit-pick. Both Mike Carlin, my editor at DC, and Tom Brevoort, my main editor at Marvel, have a good sense of what makes a good comic, and they help keep me on track, be it in story or art. We can't work well in a vacuum. I know I need input into my work, because I'm just too close to see the major flaws.

DRAW!: Okay, now that you've solved the layout bugs and that stage is done, you move on to the actual penciling of the work. How do you approach the penciling? What type of paper do you like: Hot press or cold press? Give me a lowdown on the tools you use: Favorite pencils, etc.

JO: I used to prefer the rougher surface paper, but at Marvel I've come to like the smooth stuff (plate finish). As I mentioned, I use mechanical pencils and keep a variety of them with different leads. The kneaded erasers I like are no longer manufactured I'm told, and my supply is running out. For the way I use them, to kind of blot up the excess graphite, I need one that doesn't leave a grit on the paper for my pencil to pick up when tightening up. The standard gray ones leave a grit, so I'm going to have to change my whole approach! I suppose I could find out how to make them myself, but...

DRAW!: Yes, but the kitchen would be a mess and the house might stink

a bit. Do you employ any swipe like photos and other reference? And by swipe I mean the traditional way that term was used by illustrators, which meant any extra material,

Back **THE AVENGERS** Issue #11 Story Page 4 Page 4



photos, drawings of things like cars and places used to do an accurate drawing of something. In comics it's come to mean copying someone else's work. Do you have a morgue, or a filing cabinet full of clipped and alphabetized reference? Do you stage and take photos yourself?

JO: I use whatever I can for reference. I have clipped and collected magazine pictures since I worked in commercial art, many years ago, and have them organized in a big file cabinet. It's a must for me, and I would recommend it to anyone. For example, I have a whole file folder of "flying" shots—poses of people that can be used for making a superhero look like he's really flying. I also have animals, locations, vehicles, etc. The way I generally work with figures though is to draw it first from my head, and then use the reference to add shadows or to fine-tune my anatomy. For figures I have a reference set called the Fairburn Books, which are ring-bound, 11"x17" with a variety of models, clothed and unclothed, doing a variety of things: walking, running, sitting. Again, usually I work backwards with these, drawing the pose first, then referencing to flesh it out. I have on rare occasion, taken my own photos, mainly for my paintings. More often, I will strike a pose in the large floor-standing mirror I have in my studio, and draw live. This is incredibly useful for drawing hands, etc. Plus you get to act for the mirror! I can't tell you how many times my family has walked into my studio while I was posing for myself, and busted out laughing!

DRAW!: I bet. Well, a mirror is really a must for an artist for just this type of thing. I also find it's great for drawing expressions. You just look at yourself acting it out. Animators especially find this useful. What type of lead do you like, HB, 2B? I know every artist has his own preference.

JO: The hardness or softness of the leads I use varies with the seasons, based on humidity. In the Summer I tend towards softer leads, because the paper absorbs more moisture. In the Winter, I get by with harder leads. My concern is to find the lead that will not gouge the paper, but also will not easily smudge, because either can be an inker's nightmare.

DRAW!: And how do you alter your penciling for a job you will ink, and a job you won't ink?

JO: If I know beforehand I am going to ink my work, I don't pencil beyond the rough stage, preferring to finish it in the inks. Normally, I pencil very tight otherwise.



OPPOSITE: The finished penciled page by Ordway. **ABOVE:** The rough layout that Ordway drew, then blew up and used as an underdrawing on a lightbox to finish the pencils. **RIGHT:** Another plot page from Ordway's script.

Having spent a lot of time as an inker, I'm sensitive to making sure the inker doesn't have to worry about everything being there on the page.

DRAW!: Are there "dream inkers" you like to work with or be inked by? Are there pencilers you'd love to ink?

JO: I am very much looking forward to being inked by Karl Kesel on *USAgent*, but beyond that I just hope for the best. I've worked with some really good guys in my career. As for pencilers, I'd still like to ink a Gene Colan job. He was a big favorite of mine when I was a kid, mainly because of his work on *Daredevil*. Again, I've been lucky to ink some of the best in my time

DRAW!: Who would you site as your major and continuing artistic influences? Do you regularly "shed"? It's sort of a musical term to describe going out back to practice their licks in the tool shed. Do you continue to study and sketch, brush up on anatomy or techniques?

AVENGERS #16/"Mistaken ID" Plot by Jerry Ordway/

/11-98/page#5

PAGE 13:

Cap rushes along the alley where the Wrecker disappeared, and sees a pried door leading to some upstairs, and follows. Inside, we see the Wrecker barreling through an apartment, grabbing a beignet (a square powdered doughnut) off a kitchen plate as he passes, pushing the tenant backwards with a shrug of his shoulder. Tenant says, "That's the last beignet!" Wrecker says, "Ben-gay? I thought it was a doughnut!" Tenant crashes through window! Cap jumps in, locking Wrecker upside the head, and as he rolls over, Wrecker swings his bar in a wide arc just pulverizing the exterior facing wall!

PAGE 14:

Cap activates his electronic force shield, to absorb the impact of the bar before the building collapses around them! Wrecker is stunned, backed up to the open hole in the wall, where we see Thor, outside, depositing the tenant (who fell out the window) to the balcony below. Wrecker sees his old nemesis, and leaps off and down at Thor! In bgkd, Cap shields a woman (guy's wife) from a chunk of falling ceiling!

PAGE 15:

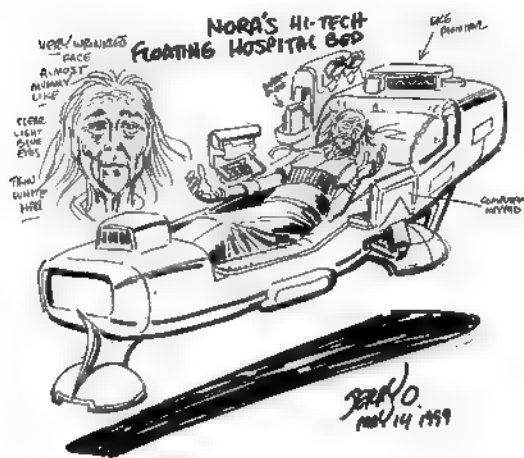
Thor blocks the bar with his hammer's handle, and then flips Wrecker over his head where he crashes into a light-pole! Wrecker grabs the wires from the broken pole and jolts himself with even more power! Then he digs his prybar into the pavement and upends some cars and people, causing a bit of confusion and panic, to say the least. At this point we also see the other Crew-guys toss off their disguises ready to surprise-attack some other Avengers!

PAGE 16:

Thunderball slams a low flying Iron Man with his ball, and in the background we see Wanda, Wonderman and Firestar doing the rescue-thing with folks hurt by flying debris and stuff! Wonderman goes to help Iron Man, who's veering out of control, while Bulldozer rushes Wanda from behind, to plow into her and the paramedics loading injured folk onto gurneys. In the next instant, Vision has drifted down between, turning his body diamond hard and unmoveable, as Bulldozer slams him! Meanwhile, Piledriver and Black Knight are going at it, with Dane dodging P-Driver's massive fists, while Justice arrives to help (BK doesn't see him!)

FAX TO TOM BREVOORT
FROM JERRY ORDWAY

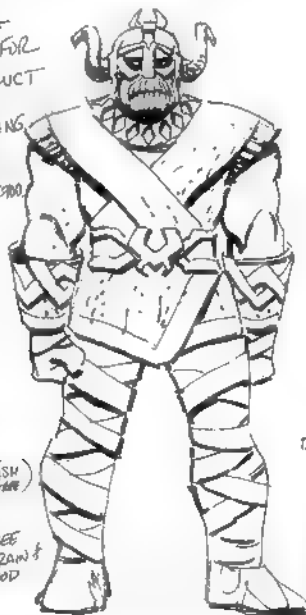
RE: DOMINATION FACTOR



TO TOM BREVOORT / RE AVENGERS DOMINATION FACTOR

TOM —
HERE'S A
SKETCH FOR
CONSTRUCT
N
BEGINNING
OF
AVENGERS
DOM FACTOR

ALL
WOOD (ASH)
TREE
CLOSE UP
WE CAN SEE
THE GRAIN &
BARK OF WOOD

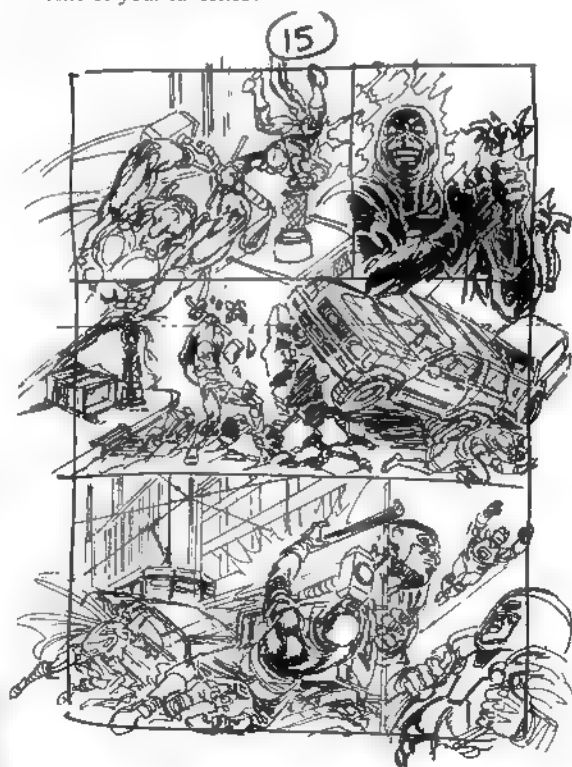


DAN'S
TREE GUY
CAN BE
OF
ALDEVE
WOOD
FITTING INTO
ASGARD
LEGENDARY
HOLM & EYE
STORY

ABOVE: Even though artist Dan Jurgens's issue of *Fantastic Four: Domination Factor* came first, Ordway designed many of the main characters, props, etc.
RIGHT & NEXT PAGE: The rough and finished pencils for another page from issue #16.

JO: I would have to say John Buscema, Wally Wood, Alex Raymond, Roy Crane, and Jack Kirby. I learn from everything I see, and am inspired by every artist I study. I don't do much sketching, but I do keep abreast of the people in comics, and try to learn from the best. I just apply it right to the pages. I think I am never totally happy with the work I'm doing, and that keeps me working harder to improve. Some days I have a hard time drawing anything, and that keeps me very humble.

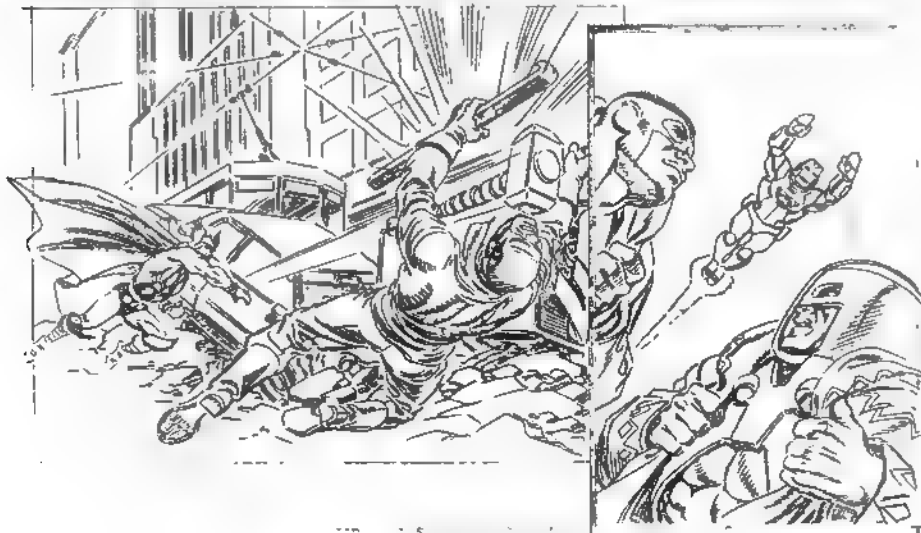
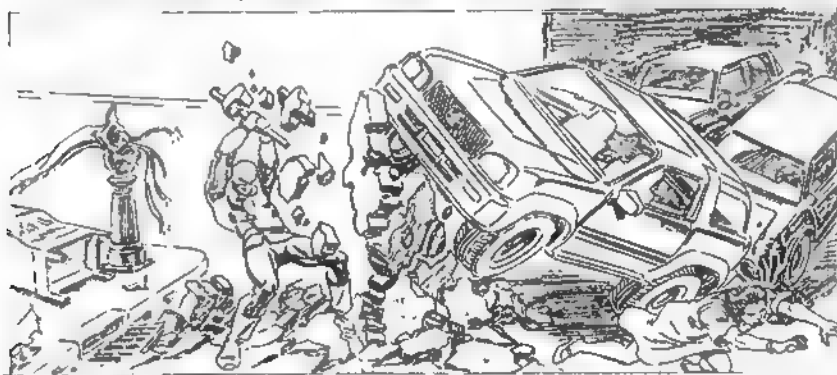
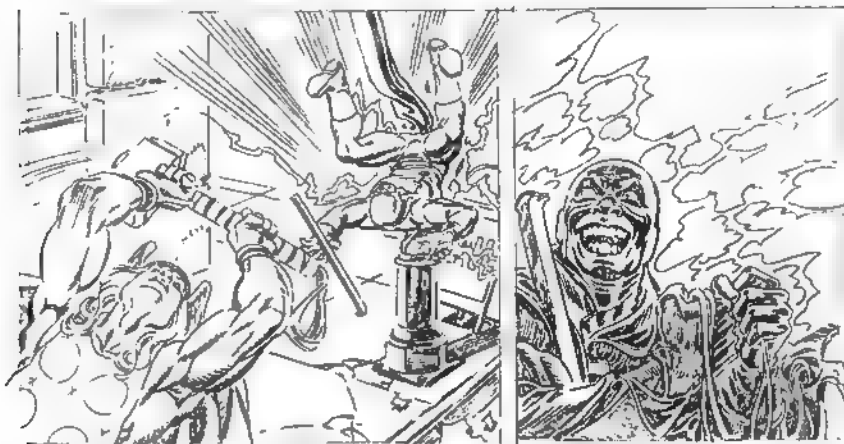
DRAW!: Okay, on to the part I enjoy more than any other on the job, the inking. I think you are one of the outstanding inkers in the field. Often inking can just ruin the best pencils, or save a bad job if the inker is a better draftsman than the penciler. I always think of inking as drawing, just drawing in ink as opposed to pencil; not just tracing with a pretty line. Your drawing skill really shines through here, as well as your mastery of texture and skill with the pen and brush. Are there inkers you aspire to and have learned from? Who are some of your favorites?



JO: I grew up reading Marvel comics and being inspired by guys like Joe Sinnott, Dick Giordano, Wally Wood, and Tom Palmer. Those are guys I emulated. Sinnott has this very precise line, but also just excelled at textures, especially over Kirby. Dick had this great juicy brush line that

wouldn't quit! And Palmer had that same feel. He also colored his own work, which was a revelation to me. I remember being inspired by Klaus Janson as well—these were all inkers who could draw.

END OF PART 1 



TO TOM BREVOORT
FROM JERRY ORDWAY

#3. SKETCH

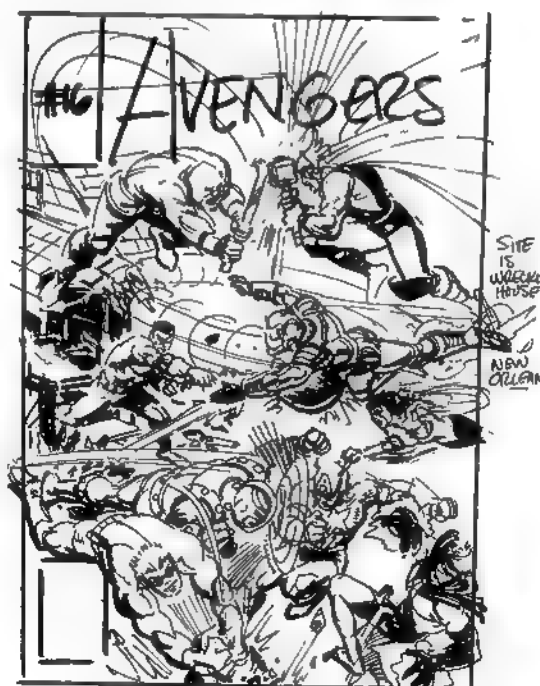


ABOVE: Rough for the cover art that began this article.

RIGHT: Cover roughs showing different compositions by Ordway. He faxes them through to editor Tom Brevoort and they confer by phone. Once a final layout is picked, Ordway proceeds to finish.



FAX TO TOM BREVOORT, MARVEL COMICS FDI JRL



MAN. NOV 9 1993, 4:40 PM

SKETCH BY JERRY ORDWAY

MARVEL
COMICS

BOOK: THE AVENGERS

ISSUE: 16 MONTH:
EDITOR: TOM BRIDGEMAN

The final cover
inked with a
Hunt 102 Crow
Quill and a
brush to accent
a few lines and
fill blacks.

PAID
DEC 9
1998
FINISHED
JAN 14

FAX TO TOM BREVOORT, MARVEL COMICS

JOF 6

Avengers #17 Plot for 22 pages/ Ordway pen & ink/ 1-99/ Page 1

1/22 98

TITLE: ~~CAST~~ ~~in a~~ ~~three~~ MACHINE

PAGE ONE: Open on Thor swinging hammer in an arc, to open a dimensional portal to Arkon's world. Recap briefly that Wrecking Crew has disappeared with an injured Photon, and that the energy signature left in their wake pointed to Polemachus. Title and credits here.

PAGE TWO-THREE: Doublespread over top two-thirds, of Avengers entering the swirling portal, again driving more recap

and noting that Justice is accidentally by Black Knight HQ to have his head wound has a chip on his shoulder taken by the Wreckers! A but her power is needed, then attend to Vance. She Wreckers as well as Dan be beyond the mistake th Okay, on bottom, we see sight of destruction— built Polemachus skyline!

PAGE FOUR: Average for head trauma in a hi-to Jane Foster offers her two that Vance is actually up for the next few days. He some bruises. Iron Man is him up in a guest room. ~~CAST~~ ~~from~~ ~~HOST~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~SH~~

PAGE FIVE: Suddenly, in and she's retelling how she recap from last ish, of C watches in horror! She a to find Warbird! Vance (u Iron-Man puts a hand to hi Jan— you say the POWER That may mean someone if we follow the trail, we

Book THE AVENGERS

Issue #17

Story Page 8

Page 22

ORDWAY-GORDON



Here are examples from Ordway's second Avengers fill-in. By this time he felt he was sufficiently warmed up and familiar with the characters to do small thumbnails, then proceed to draw right on the page, foregoing any layout stage.

THE AVENGERS

Issue

#17

Story

Page 4

Line Up

Page 8

LETTER G AND
BROKEN LINE DOX

ORDWAY: "The most difficult thing with a group book is to give everyone a good heroic shot, and get the gesture right! With Comicroft lettering, I focused only on drawing, and was able to script the whole job after it was penciled. That's almost harder for me creatively than doing it all up front when my energy level is higher, than at the end of 22 pages when I just want to rest."



COVERS - ILLUSTRATION QUALITY

PRINTS
AT 80%

Here is an example where, to make it read better, Ordway reduced the woman's head so that the tiara wouldn't be obscured by the logo. Ordway inked the entire cover with a Hunt 102 Crow Quill pen nib, except for a few brush lines here and there to enhance a line weight or fill blacks.

*COLOR: MAIN LIGHT SOURCE (WIND) IS OFFEN PALM. NAKED DOGGER HUSK ALL OVER? ALSO, HER LEFT TIT IS GROWN.



TITLE AVENGERS: DOMINATION FACTOR

#4

MONTH

ARTIST JERRY ORDWAY

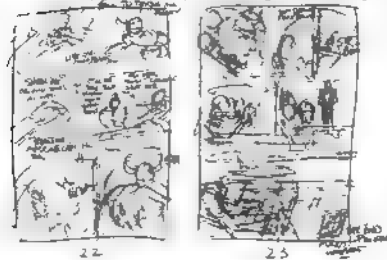
EDITOR: TOM BREVOORT

MARVEL
COMICS

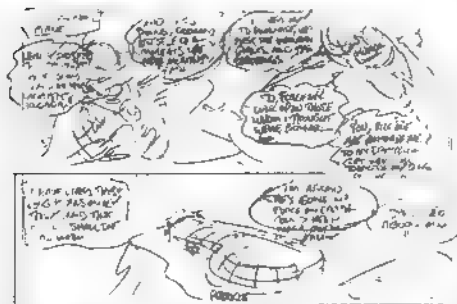
Avengers/Jerry Ordway/Pencil/22 pages/2000

PAGE 22: In a swirling vortex between spiritland and earthly planes, Loki's spirit curses them and says to Knorra's future spirit, "Thou hast doomed thyself!" Knorra says, "I will LIVE on my own terms, and I shall DIE that way as well. My vanity blinded me to that before, Trickster!" Back to the present, at Praxis HQ from the real timeline as we see Nora Queen dies of old age. Her employees are oblivious to the image of Hela who has come to take her spirit away. She goes willingly even saying, "prayed it would be you, Hela. Hela says you are not my prize this day Knorra, you are destined for Valhalla, to spend eternity as an Asgardian. Cut to: Loki, on Asgard, in his current disguised garb looking into an energy orb. An image of Knorra and Hela is on it. "A Viking death" for an old hag. Born of the mountain plateaus of Asgard, only to die a mortal.

PAGE 23: Things are back as they were on Midgard—Thor and those other costumed do-gooders remain for me to VEX another day. This outcome was inevitable, as foretold to me by the three fates long ago. Still, it did serve to AMUSE me whilst I waited. Then the image changes, to the Thing and Sue on their flying bike from issue #1 of FF. Some scene next—Air force one, and Ben and Sue flying shotgun, while friends we see Reed and Storm inside, admiring the Knorra statue given to the President. Reed and Tony look at it in a daze via sort of way. Next we see air traffic control giving AF1 clearance to land at LaGuardia airport and on the Air Traffic Controller's screen we see the Vision's computer presence telling them "everything's a-ok for landing!"



Avengers/Jerry Ordway/Pencil/23 pages/2000



Here is another sample of Ordway working out his compositions and storytelling from *Domination Factor*. Ordway roughed the pencils right on the final board. After they were lettered, they were then tightened and inked by Ordway. This sped up the process, helping him to get the book done faster. But as the deadline closed in, Ordway called in his old pal Dennis Janke, a frequent inker on Ordway's work on *Superman* for DC in the past.



OUR INTERVIEW WITH JERRY ORDWAY CONTINUES IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF DRAW!, FEATURING HIS WORK FROM THE POWER OF SHAZAM! AND MORE!



BUILDING THE PERFECT BODY

UNLIKE THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S INVISIBLE WOMAN, WHO CAN COME AND GO AT WILL, "THE BOD" CAN ONLY STAY INVISIBLE. UNLIKE HER FELLOW HOLLYWOOD STAR, THE INVISIBLE MAN, WHO RAN ABOUT LOOKING LIKE A REFUGEE FROM THE ENGLISH PATIENT, "THE BOD" STILL MANAGES TO CHARM HER WAY INTO TINSELTOWN'S HEART, DESPITE THE FACT THAT NO ONE CAN SEE HER AND SHE'S NOT MARRIED TO SOME SWELL-HEADED GUY NAMED "MR. FANTASTIC." DRAW! CATCHES UP WITH CREATORS LARRY YOUNG AND JOHN HEEBINK AS THEY POUND THE KEYS AND PUSH THE PENCILS, SWEATING IT OUT BUILDING THE BOD, THEIR NEW CREATOR-OWNED

PROJECT FROM IMAGE COMICS

—INTERVIEW BY MIKE MANLEY

Spearhead of the AIT/Planet Lar empire, Larry Young is a creative production, publishing, distribution and retailing dynamo. He has received many awards and accolades from fans and pros for his work on *Astronauts in Trouble*. Currently Young is teaming with artist and long time comic veteran John Heebink on their creator-owned book *The Bod* for Image Comics.

The Bod is the tale of Jenny White, a gorgeous girl from rural Kansas who leaves her college drama department to make it big in Hollywood. While waiting for her big break, she works for a movie special effects unit rigging explosions, making models, and cleaning up, until an accident on the set changes all that.

Now, a gorgeous, talented gal who couldn't get the time of day in a town filled with gorgeous, talented women has the perfect thing to set her apart from everyone else. She's invisible! **DRAW!** editor Mike Manley grills both Young and Heebink to get their secret formula behind *The Bod*.

INTERVIEW WITH LARRY YOUNG

DRAW!: Okay, I'd guess I'd like to dive right in. How do you collaborate with John?

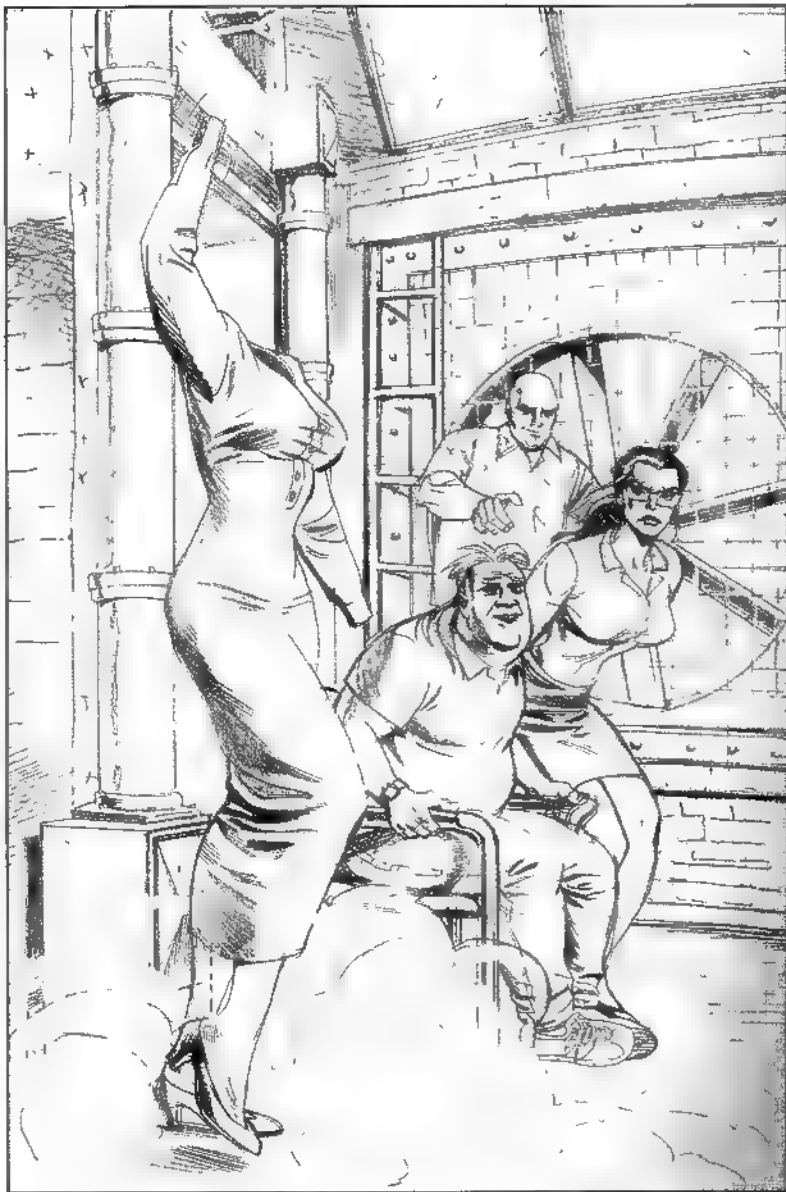
LY: Well, of course, every one is different. On the *Astronauts in Trouble* family of graphic novels, I write 'em up full script for Charlie Adlard, who somehow draws up an adventure that's even better than what I've described. Charlie and I are on the same wavelength.

For *The Bod* though, I just paced out a "Marvel-style" plot for John on the first issue, and told him over the phone that certain things that I asked for were going to end up as motifs and parallel-structure things in later chapters, so if he had any ideas of stuff to throw in I totally trusted him on additive changes, but if he felt subtractive changes were called for, to give me a ring so we could hash it out. The fact that John's a pal and lives just a ways down the street certainly makes that sort of thing easier.

Ol' Binky is one of the most easy-going guys I know, so the whole collaboration thing is just a pleasure from beginning to end. I'm sure this'll sound like I'm shining his shoes, but he's a great guy. On *The Bod*, for example, I outlined the idea of an invisible Hollywood starlet to him, and the idea that it's a take on the nature of celebrity. I know John is a skilled artist and, further, has a facility with the female form (he'll probably put this on his resumé now: "John Heebink has a facility with the female form; bachelorette parties a specialty"), and so would be able to

handle a book whose central character isn't really there for most of the story.

And even if he is being uncharacteristically recalcitrant, I can just buy him a beer or two, get him liquored-up, and get my way. Seriously, John's a good egg. The job we've been doing has been nothing but fun for me



RIGHT: *The Bod* struts her stuff before her friends in pencils from the second issue.

DRAW!: Is it loose or tight? Plot or full script?

LY: Naw, it's totally loose. John knows what he's doing, and he trusts me that I know where I'm going with the story, so I write up a loose plot, John delivers in spades, and I dialogue to his art. The fact that I'm also doing the lettering shaves days off the timetable, because I don't have to do a lettering script and then worry if John and inker Andy Kuhn's awesome art will get obscured. If something gets covered up, there's a reason for it. I'll be able to explain to the lads if they get bent out of shape, so far, though, it's been smooth sailing.

DRAW!: Now you've had a lot of success self-publishing your own books like *Astronauts in Trouble*. How did you go about picking a publisher other than yourself this time out and why?

LY: Well, I certainly wanted to see how the Image deal worked, but I didn't really make a concerted effort to pitch stuff to anyone. But when Joe Casey offered up the back-half slot of his proposed *Double Image* project, we would have been chumps to say no.

DRAW!: What do you feel is the main difference between doing it all yourself and essentially packaging a book for Image?

LY: In terms of the work, it's exactly the same. The writing, the lettering, the print management, and art trafficking, solicitation copywriting—that's all the work I would have to do if *The Bod* was an AiT/Planet Lar graphic novel.

With Image, though, we were on the back cover of *Previews*, we had a two-page color ad, and the attendant rise in copies moved. It really is a Pavlovian reaction that retailers have to that ol' Image "I" on the cover, and well, God bless 'em. A whole lot of stores outside of major metropolitan areas ordered *Double Image* that definitely wouldn't have ordered it if it appeared as the *Codeflesh* and *The Bod* graphic novels in black-&-white from my publishing house. So I guess the main difference is the wider exposure and greater audience.

ABOVE: A tight rough for the previous page, which Heebink puts into his artograph, traces down onto the final paper, then fully pencils.

RIGHT: The thumbnail rough for the finished, inked art on the next page.



DRAW!: Sounds like a very pragmatic business point. Do you have a long term game plan in store for *The Bod* beyond the initial series?

LY: Naw, that's it. It's a story with a beginning, middle, and end. I'm already fielding the inevitable calls from Hollywood, though, seeing if the property is available for adaptation, so the story may have some life beyond the comics.

DRAW!: I think it's a great twist to do a T&A book and the subject herself is invisible. Do you feel it's an extra challenge to create situations with drama and tension with an invisible lead character and keep it not only interesting, but sexy? You don't have the extras that cinema does, like sound effects and movement.

LY: That's one of the conceits of this story that John and I are telling; that our main character, Kelly Gordon, has become a famous movie star, not because of a winning smile, or an approachable screen persona, or a sturdy and honest presence, or any of the other qualities that movie stars have that make them appealing. No, our girl has become famous because her stand-out quality is that she isn't there. So everything in the story revolves around the fact that she's famous; not around why, exactly, she got so famous. *The Bod* is a lot more straight-forward in its commentary than people will first think. But as a writer, I like to lead folks down one way and spring something else up later. I'm the anti-John Grisham, that way.

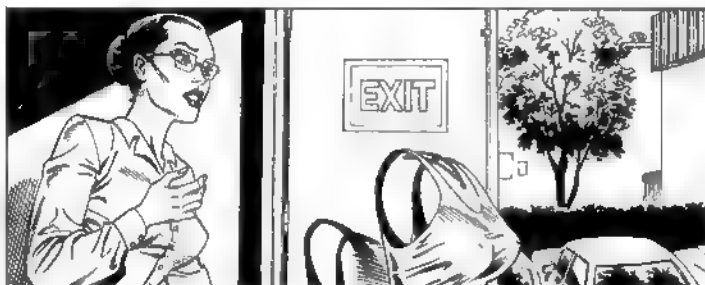
DRAW!: This is also a place for you to fill in the freelance spectators on the side of the pool on the merits and pitfalls of self-publishing and creating "intellectual property."

LY: One of the things I like about the Image deal is that we keep the copyrights, and it's not very much unlike self-publishing in that sense. There's a real do-it-yourself

ethic to getting the artwork ready for publishing. As you can probably imagine, I'm a big fan of having control over the final product, and there's nothing like putting that final stamp of approval on something you've done yourself.

DRAW!: Thanks Larry 

You can keep up-to-date with all the latest news on Larry's upcoming projects via his web site at:
<http://www.ait-planetlar.com/>
 and his column *Loose Cannon* on Comicbook Resources at:
<http://www.comicbookresources.com/>



Another page,
featuring inks by
Walden Wong.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN HEEBINK

Now we move on to interview the artist part of the Bod creative team, John Heebink. John is a rarity today in comics: A versatile journeyman penciler you don't come across much anymore, well-versed in a variety of styles and techniques—portraiture, caricature, animation and film storyboarding, and product illustration.

John has lent his smart and sexy draftsmanship to a wide variety of titles including *S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Quasar*, *Elvira*, *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*, as well as his own creator-owned works *Wrathbone* and *Bitchula* and the upcoming *Doll and Creature* with studiomate Rick Remender. I've been best buds with "Binky" for nearly 20 years, from our days back in Ann Arbor, Michigan trying to break into the comics biz.

DRAW!: Okay Binky, you know what I'm after. Basically I want step-by-step how you go about doing the art for *The Bod* and how you collaborate with Larry Young. After getting the script or plot from Larry, what's your first step?

JH: First I eyeball the plot for opportunities to take the story in unexpected directions—especially if they're unexpected to Larry. I think it's important for the artist to stand up and make sure he gets his creative input. For that reason, I like to make big changes in the story and the characters and tell Larry about them after I've sent the pages to the inker. This makes me feel valued and makes up for that hot, twisting feeling I'd get in in my stomach back in third grade when the other kids made fun of me. (uproarious laughter) Naw, hopefully Larry told you I'm a pretty faithful interpreter of his intent. His plots are

LEFT & NEXT PAGE: Heebink's pencils from the first issue. The ambulance rushes Jenny White to the hospital after her accident. The next page shows the Emergency Deadline Doom! Inks by *DRAW!* editor Mike Manley.



anything but wordy, so I get to imagine things my own way to a great extent, which is as much a burden as a blessing in my book. *You* guys should work together, Mike, because I know you don't like being confined by a super-tight, *Watchmen*-like script. I could go either way

DRAW!: Do you layout the whole book, or do you do it in chunks?

JH: I *should* layout the whole book before I start penciling.

That's my ideal, but I don't, usually. Because I get impatient, I skip around. I layout the pages first in little, tiny thumbnails, at least sometimes. I always do a set of roughs at smaller than final size in pencil, about 4"x6". They're structural, not detailed. Then I use the Artograph opaque projector or my eye to enlarge them to 10"x15" in blue pencil on the Bristol. I use Strathmore 500-grade 2-ply Smooth Finish Bristol Board. Then I "tight-pencil" over that with pencils in the 2H to HB range. Any bigger areas of shading I'll put in with the side of a pencil that's 2H or harder.



DRAW!: I'll ask you the same question I asked Larry: I think it's a great twist to do a T&A book and the subject herself is invisible. How do you solve the challenge to create situations with an invisible character and keep it not only fresh, but sexy? Do you draw her all out, then erase her?

JH: I was thinking last night I should do that. It might add to the reality and make the laying out more fun. Remember how you used to chide me for never doing anything in my sketchbook but heads and bodies, bodies and heads? That's really where my interest lies, especially faces. The bodies, and body language, are more of a struggle. I'd be as happy drawing a soap opera or love comic as a super hero book for that reason. I like doing different faces, eyes, facial expressions. I'm getting off-subject, but it's kind of ironic that I'm doing *Doll and Creature* with you and Rick (*Captain Dingleberry*) Remender next, 'cause most of the major characters in that have blanked-out eyes, gouged-out eyes. That comes from Rick having read too many X-books as a child in the early '90s, I think. I like eyeballs.

DRAW!: Yes, I plan to be the lowly inker on *Doll and Creature* if it ever takes off. But it's fun working with friends.

JH: Yes, it sure can be. A few years ago I drew *Phantom of Fear City*, written by Steve Englehart, which was basically a soap opera with supernatural elements. Lotsa' talking. It suited me fine. Me like draw peoples!

About the challenge of making her sexy, it's not too tough. So far Larry's written situations where she's wearing clingy clothing, so I invest her with as much "body sense" as I can. It's not by design a T&A book. It has that element, largely because of my, uh, "needs" as an artist. But it's actually about tweaking the nose of the sex-driven side of American pop culture. It's Larry's take on the exalted but impermanent status we give celebrities.

Kelly Gordon is visually "non-present" through most of the story. That works as a comment on the trumped-up, ephemeral, empty nature of fame these days.

DRAW!: Now since you are coloring this book yourself, you have a lot more control over the final look than most mainstream pencilers ever get. To what degree are you planning design for the total look from beginning to finish, allowing effects and certain elements of art to be enhanced or carried by color? How do you figure that out? At which stage?

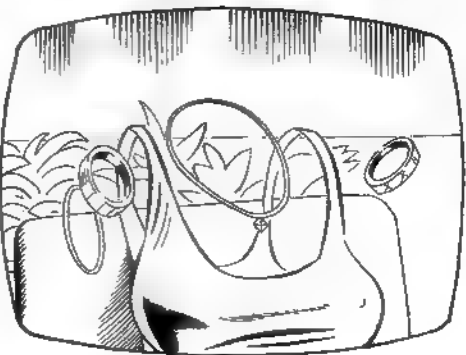
JH: I think most comic book artists unconsciously color the comics we draw. Even artists who aren't very oriented toward actually working in color can be shocked by a coloring job by somebody else that flouts their unspoken expectations. I only think

of color in the most general terms as I draw. Coloring is probably the part of the job I'm the least analytical and self-critical about. It's just fun for me. I get to bring in cool little things I've observed about people's faces that



ABOVE: One of Heebink's rough page layouts done from Larry's script.

can't be expressed well in the binary starkness of black-&-white. I can also take the pages I didn't ink very well and make them look fine. Good coloring out-powers bad inking.



The final page, penciled by Heebink and inked by Andy Kuhn,
featuring Jenny on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno.

Hopefully, when I'm coloring I'm not pulling attention away from the point of a panel. When I was at Marvel, I never had particularly good coloring. There's such a difference when your work is colored by someone who clearly has an eye toward serving the story, leading the attention to where it ought to be, in addition to making nice color combinations. I hope I'm doing both, but I'm real close to the work, and I'm not intellectual about it. I'm always blundering onto little effects that I think look cool and just using them.

Coloring is like inking: It's not best practiced in a vacuum, in the absence of other related skills. A lot of colorists have no idea how shadow falls on a human face. They haven't really observed it because they haven't learned to draw. They end up amplifying the shading information that the artist puts in the line art, instead of complementing it and elaborating on it—the way they work, it's just reactive.

Color looks like it's applied to the surface of the object when you don't know what you're doing. The thing you intended as a shadow looks

like a bruise if you don't put it on right. And, as you always say, coloring is the one aspect of the job everyone thinks they can do.

DRAW!: I assume you are doing the coloring in Photoshop?

JH: Yeah. Photoshop is lord. I'm so into that program, it's like it's programmed me. I see little paint buckets in my sleep. Its logic is a part of my biology now.

The evolution of a cover, from thumbnail to inks.



Give me a couple of minutes and I can usually think of *two* ways to do anything—or tell you that it probably can't be done. And I might only know a fraction of what Photoshop can do

I use three layers now, one for color, one for the line art and one that's just white. I use Select>Color Range... to select just the white areas on the "line art" layer. I delete the white and check the "Preserve Transparency" checkbox for the line art layer. The white layer then keeps the transparency checkerboard from showing though the

openings.

I suppose I could just turn off the checkerboard and save the file size needed to create the white layer; I don't know. This method gets me two things: First, if I try to color on the line art layer, it won't accept it. That helps me keep the layers straight and that can avoid confusion and mystery in the layer blending. Second, it gives me one more way to change the color of black linework. I can just paint the part I want to change without even making a selection! The white areas are unaffected.

So much of what can make a Photoshop color job appealing is what Larry would call "monkey tricks": Easy stuff like using gradients a bit, especially for skies; selectively colorizing black linework, and so on. A favorite of mine is using the Multiply blend mode to add a pure, pale color like pink or blue or gray over all or part of a colored scene to force the whole thing into harmony. Mathematics in the service of aesthetics. . .

DRAW!: Ha! My worst subject! I thought I could get away from all those numbers when drawing. Do you do any guides for yourself first?

JH: Ha-ha-ha-ha. Uh, no.

DRAW!: Do you have any particular style, mood or feel in mind?

JH: In terms of the art style, I'm trying to do standard '50s comic-strip pseudo-realism with a touch of cartoony, animated feel to liven it up. I grew up loving Neal Adams' work and now I love the guys that influenced him, like Stan Drake, Alex Raymond.

With color, I'm just getting to where I'm keeping the color consistent within scenes. I do think about the emotive effects of cool, versus warm, versus grayed-out, versus saturated color.



INKING

JH: We've had really good inkers on this series; a lot of inkers because when we got the go-ahead, we were close to the deadline. I inked a bunch; I got help from Remender, my sometime assistant Peter Secosh, some guy named Manster or Manlick or something like that, and Walden Wong, who did two brilliantly neat pages in a day. We'd lined up Walden to be our regular inker, and he's still our inker of record and will be doing at least the cover and a few pages on every issue, but he had to reduce his commitment because of all the work he's getting from the majors.

Walden is really quick, clean and neat. His brush feathering is amazing. Lots of guys with his skills might be *prima donnas*, but his attitude is all teamwork.

Larry arranged for Andy Kuhn (*Marvel Adventures*, *Freak Force*) to assume the inking that Walden couldn't handle. I like Andy's work a lot and like him a hell of a lot personally, but I never would have thought of him as an inker. I'd never known him to take any work that was just inking. That was Larry's inspiration, and it's worked out great.

Andy's really conscientious, catching my continuity gaffes, calling me with questions, usually about my continuity gaffes. He brings a liveliness and expressiveness to the faces that only a cartoonist can.

People use "cartoony" in a slightly dismissive way sometimes, which I think is just completely wrong.

DRAW!: Oh, I agree 100%.



RIGHT & NEXT PAGE: The splash from issue #1, as penciled by Heebink and inked by **DRAW!** editor Mike Manley.

JH: Something that's cartoony communicates more vividly, more instantly. Andy's a cartoonist and I'd like to think I am. He knows how to make forms crisp and simplified and strong and he handles that elusive human element exceedingly well. The eyes have life and light and the faces are consistent and full of emotion. Andy's inking more with a brush than he's used to, to be more in line with my style. In his own stuff he's using a "dead" line.

You have to be really good for that to work, like Rizzo or Mignola, and he is. The pages I inked, I inked with a #2 Raphael 8404 or 8408 Kolinsky Sable watercolor brush and a Gillott nib.

I was originally going to try to pencil really tightly and not ink the pages. That's why, on the pages you inked, the pencil lines were dark and heavy. I'd done a cover for the magazine *Food Quality* that way, and was happy with how it looked. But there's so much on a comics page. To keep it all tight and cleaned-up and unsmeary was more than I could handle. I couldn't get a scan I liked. *B*



INKING SIDEBAR

DRAW! editor Mike Manley inked this page using a combination of brush, Kolinsky Sable No. 3, Pelican ink, Hung 108 pen nibs, as well as No. 1 and 0.2 Pigma Markers.

"The Pigmars dry very fast and make inking and ruling backgrounds quick and easy on a tight deadline where pen inking may take a lot longer to dry—important when you have a tight Fed-Ex cut off!"

from the indies to the MAJORS

A CANDID INTERVIEW AND DEMONSTRATION
WITH PHIL HESTER

Until recently Phil Hester almost seemed to be one of comics best kept secrets. The easygoing mid-western manner and jovial demeanor of this father of two, belied the dark and gothic stories and images churning in the mind of this writer-artist dynamo who toils away from his Iowa studio. In this bucolic setting dark worlds of occult heroes and sci-fi adventure spread out to fill comic racks across America.

With seeming ease for most of his career Hester has straddled two worlds, jumping back and forth between the small press "indy" comic world with books like his Eisner-nominated "The Wretch," to mainstream hits like DC's top-selling book Green Arrow, written by Kevin [Glenck] Smith.

The Coffin, his latest mini-series for Oni Press, has been optioned by James Cameron for a big budget Hollywood movie.

DRAW! editor Mike Manley caught up with Hester at his home studio between fielding Hollywood phone calls and fixing lunch for his kids.

DRAW! So, Phil, why don't you go ahead and tell us a little bit of how you got into comics, just a little bit of the origin of Phil Hester

PHIL HESTER: The secret origin?

DRAW! The secret origin of Phil Hester, yes.

PH: Well, I started during that black-&-white explosion, Turtle Time. And basically, what I keep saying is, if you could hold a pencil at that time, you could probably get work and I was the proof. I was, like, nineteen, twenty years old and I couldn't draw but there were so many little companies that were hiring people then because there were so many books glutting the market. I was pretty good about sending my work in on a regular basis to get reviewed and get advice from editors and publishers.

DRAW! Who was on your regular hit list of people and companies you were submitting to?

PH: Well, when I got out of high school, of course, I was ready to draw *X-Men* immediately, like everybody that came out of high school, thinking, "Here I go! [laughs] New York, here I come." Eliot Brown, I think, sent me a really constructive note on a form letter that sort of put me in my place, even though it was pretty helpful. And that actually inspired me to send my stuff to as many people as I could as often as possible.

DRAW! What time was this? 1985, '86?

PH: 1984. And so, for the next two years, I had this regimen. I would send a packet every four to six months to *everybody* and in '86, there started to be a lot more comic book companies, and so my odds improved.

DRAW! So you were sending pencils of established characters like Superman, or whatever?

PH: Yeah, established characters. I would try to save work by having a submission that had both a Marvel and a DC character in it. [laughs] I'd have the Hulk fight Robotman and I could send it to both Marvel and DC. And I'd throw Airboy in there so I could send it to Eclipse. But I would send it to everybody. You know, I still have at home a bulletin board with all my rejection letters on it and it's *huge*. It's gotta be over two hundred rejection letters.

DRAW! Wow! So your stick-to-it-iveness is really a Phil Hester trait



© 2004 PHIL HESTER

PH: Yes. That's probably the only secret I'm going to impart to anybody. I mean, no one's going to learn any draftsmanship skills from me but my career's all about perseverance, I think

DRAW! Well, every freelancer, every artist you talk to in the business, basically, it's the same thing. You go through that gauntlet

PH: Oh, yeah. I have all these buddies from both high school and art school that were really super-talented, guys that I thought were much more talented than I was, and they didn't make it past their first portfolio review. Mike Carlin ended their careers in one swoop just by saying, "Your anatomy needs work." [laughs] And then they bailed.

DRAW! I still remember my first trip to Marvel was the same way. I remember Carl Potts just looking at some inking sample I did and pointing to something, like some stomach muscles I inked and that was it.

PH: A lot of guys can't take that and luckily, I don't hold my work in that high regard. [laughs] So when somebody says, "Change something," I go, "Okay."

DRAW! Well, I think that's an important thing, also, to impart to younger people reading the magazine too, is that you have to be open to criticism. I mean, that's part of this collaborative medium

PH: I think that's the number one thing I got out of art school. I have a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drawing from the University of Iowa, and that program does not teach you how to draw comic books. That program teaches you how to draw and paint and part of your first year or two in art school is dumping out all the crap you learned before, all the bad habits you learned in high school from tracing Frank Frazetta drawings or whatever. And that's what I think art school just kinda busted me open and let me take in as much as possible. It made me ready to see stuff like Bill Sienkiewicz or Dave McKean when that stuff came along.

LEFT: A page from *Freaks Amour* drawn by Hester and inked by Ande Parks.
ABOVE: A design for Boneshaker.



I think the worthwhile idea I took away from art school relates to the value of ambiguity. Art, whether it's painting or music or comics, really only becomes valuable when it's challenging. When you don't know quite what to make of it and have to grapple with it a while. I know that runs counter to a lot of the solutions we look for as cartoonists as far as creating idealized icons, or coming up with economical storytelling, but that instant of confusion leads to the most satisfying viewing.

Now, most of the quirkiness in my work is unintentional. It's just the way I draw, but I'm aware of some of the contradictions there and try to exploit them. When I'm drawing a heroic or graceful figure there's still brutality and blockiness in there. When I'm drawing some idyllic scene a high contrast shadow or something will spill across. Even when I'm being purposefully ugly and scary, something cartoony will creep in to set things off a little. That little moment of doubt is what draws me to great "weird" artists like Ditko or Krigstein, or even Tony Salmons.

DRAW: So now, as a young, young aspiring comic artist coming along, did you have your favorite artist guys you aspired to be like?

PH: Even as a kid I tended to lean towards weirdness. I mean, I liked Ditko a lot and I liked Wally Wood before I even knew who he was. I could see that darkness on an occasional job he'd ink, like a Power Girl story, or something, over Ric Estrada and

you go, "That looks different from everything else." I liked Jack Kirby, of course, and I loved Gene Colan. And I give myself credit for liking Frank Miller and Will Eisner even when I was a kid. I craved anything that was outside of the norm.

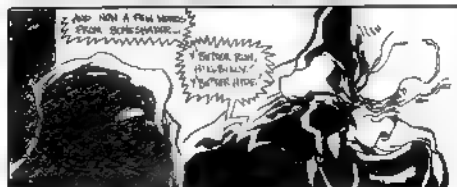
DRAW: So you tended to like dark, spooky and moody stuff, stuff with atmosphere?

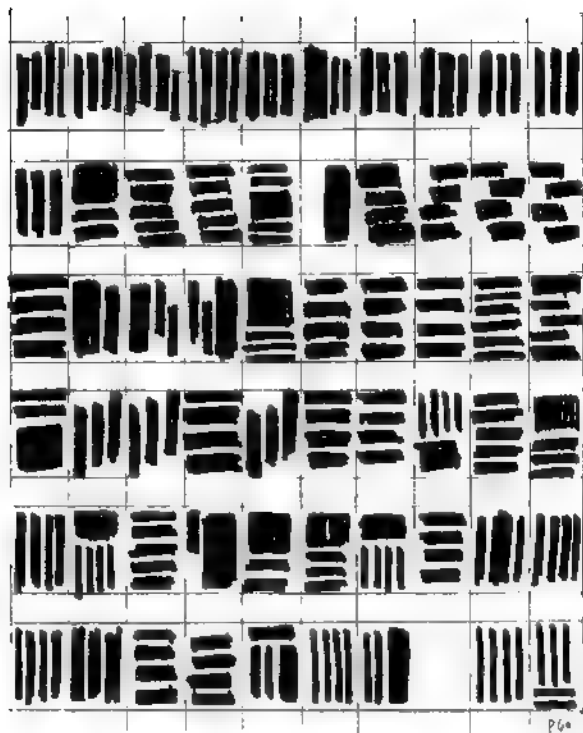
PH: Yeah. Mike Ploog, Wrightson and all that, Frank Robbins, anything that was a little bit off-kilter appealed to me.

DRAW: So you were not going in as much for more attractive mainstream heroes?

PH: No, I loved that too. I love guys who draw pretty. Back then, I loved Pérez and Byrne and Don Newton—Cartoony, shiny, pretty. But at the same time, I would turn around and read a Jim Mooney "Supergirl" just as happily. But I could see that I was getting drawn towards horror stuff and weirder stuff. When you see Basil Wolverton and it makes sense to you, you know you're basically going to be messed up. [laughs]

BELOW: Two pages from *Boneshaker* published by Caliber, written, drawn, lettered, and inked on tons board by Hester. BONESHAKER © 2004 PHIL HESTER.





Although I enjoy the story I wrote for *Boneshaker*, it's actually just a vehicle for a few storytelling experiments I wanted to explore. Rhythm was my primary concern. Previously my work has been about composition and lights and darks (if anything) and I wanted to explore rhythm, not only inside the page, but throughout the length of the story. Panel to panel. Page to page. Chapter to chapter.

I told each segment end to end to see how panel drift within the page led the eye through the story. You can see an overview of the entire story pictured here. It starts with monotonous bar-like panels sloshing like slow waves and ends with choppy breaks and big panels.

PH: Yeah, when you're a kid, you're just, "Cool!" And you get a little self-conscious about it when you get older but then you get really old and you don't care. [laughs]

DRAWI: That's one of the benefits of getting older, one of the few.

PH: Yeah. I don't care if anyone knows I like Pat Boyette [laughs]

DRAWI: So now, your first regular work was on what?

PH: Oh, it's an awful comic called *Port*, which was about a character who could teleport, and that was for Silverwolf Comics. I drew that when I was nineteen.

DRAWI: Now, was that your first paying gig?

PH: Yeah, they paid thirty-five dollars a page for pencils and if you're in college, that's *awesome*.

DRAWI: Oh yeah, beats flippin' burgers

PH: Yeah. I thought, "Holy cow, I'll never have to work again." And despite the fact that I knew the comics weren't that great, it was still just so exciting to be in the comic book business that I happily churned out probably six issues for them, even though only two got printed. I wound up drawing eight books for Silverwolf.

DRAWI: So that was a good training ground for you?

PH: Yeah.

DRAWI: You had deadlines and everything?

PH: I had deadlines and you had to draw things that you would never draw on your own. That is something I tell people in portfolio reviews, that nothing teaches like work. When you get a script and it says, "Draw a woman holding a baby" The average comic book artist at age nineteen, you've never drawn that.

DRAWI: You've probably never drawn a baby.

PH: Yeah, or you've never drawn the underside of a car or a train. And those are all things that work will put upon you and you'll have to learn them.

DRAWI: Right, right, right. So you went from being the aspiring fan artist to being a working professional?

PH: Pretty quickly, yeah. Even though the bar was set pretty low in 1986. [laughs]

DRAWI: That's interesting. It's always interesting to see what everybody's root influences are, and how even if after a while they sort of veer away from it, they always seem to come back to it in the end.

PH: Yeah. I can't remember the original quote, but basically every artist, no matter what field you're in, after you strip away all the pretense, you're trying to get back to what you saw when you were eleven, what first turned you on when you were eleven years old.

DRAWI: Oh, I think so. I realize that with myself now. I'm much more in touch now with what I liked or the energy of the things I liked when I was a kid than I was, say, when I was in my twenties.

ABOVE: Hester's page rhythm layouts which he printed complete with his notes in the back of *Boneshaker*, which show how he approaches the visual pacing of his pages. © 2004 PHIL HESTER.

DRAW: Right, but still, you took your “in,” your opportunity and tried to maximize the potential from it.

PH: Yeah, I guess you could say that.

DRAW: So now, you went from *Port* to...?

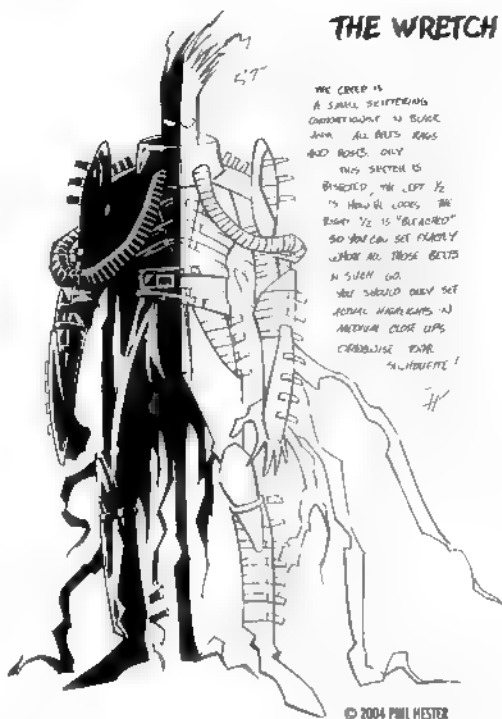
PH: Oh gosh. You know, the other day I realized how old I was when I was thinking about my file copies of all my books I’ve done. And I’m like, “I’m thirty-four. That means the first thing I ever did is fifteen years old which means I have to change the plastic bags.” [laughs] Or the chemicals will start to eat my work. And so I actually got everything out and started changing the bags I’ve drawn almost three hundred comic books. It’s a ton of stuff.

DRAW: Wow.

PH: And I’m starting to see where Stan Lee’s coming from. I’m forgetting things [laughs] That I did a lot of work for Eternity... and I guess Eternity was really my mainstay then. And Caliber. I did a series for Caliber called *Fringe* with my friend Paul Tobin. And actually worked on that too. That was one of our first collaborations.

DRAW: That’s Ande Parks, right?

PH: Yeah, that’s one of the first things he did. He followed my buddy Jim Woodyard on that book.



© 2004 PHIL HESTER

DRAW: Is that how you met Ande?

PH: Yeah, we met at a convention. You know how you get a vibe from somebody, that you’re on the same skill level? I saw that he had a lot of upside and I don’t know what he saw in me.

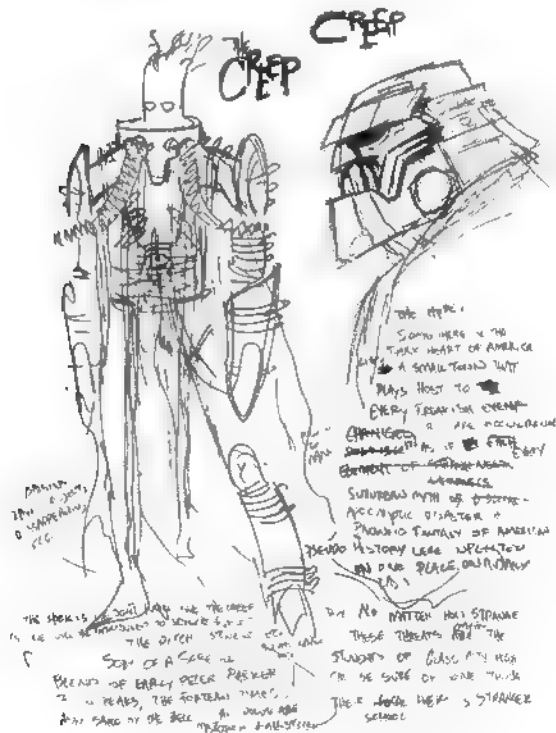
[laughs] He was the only guy I knew among my peers that was actually using a brush and using different pen nibs and not doing everything with Radiographs or markers. I thought, “Wow, that’s old school. I need to get in on that.” And we started collaborating pretty early and it’s been very successful, I think.

DRAW: So that was at Caliber you started collaborating?

PH: Yeah, professionally I mean, we did some sketches and inks together after meeting at a Kansas City convention.

DRAW: You went from working at Caliber and when did you start doing things like *The Wretch* and things like that?

PH: Well, I think that *Fringe* was kind of an indie hit for Caliber and it gave me—I hate to use the cliched term “street credentials” as an independent, semi-underground guy. And from there, I guess this is the story of my career. There is this bifurcation, there was the super-hero working man Phil Hester, then there was the artsy, short story-creating Phil Hester. And so, right after that, I started doing short stories for *Deadline, USA* and *Taboo* and *Caliber Presents* and *Negative Burn*, places like that.



© 2004 PHIL HESTER

PREVIOUS PAGE, TOP: The original designs for the Creep, who became The Wretch.

BELOW: Layouts showing Hester's thinking and visual timing and staging from *The Wretch*.



DRAW: So this is when you started not only trying to establish yourself as a regular working professional, but also as a guy who's creating your own characters, not just drawing other people's scripts?

PH: As an artist and a writer. I was writing kind of obtuse short stories and using a lot of multi-media techniques to illustrate them.

DRAW: And who were your influences as far as your writing?

PH: That's tough to say. I mean, I love Alan Moore. I think he's the best comic book writer and he's got this really authoritative voice that I'm trying to emulate. No word is misplaced in an Alan Moore script and that's something I aspire to. But as far as outside of comics, the people I really loved were Kurt Vonnegut and Joseph Heller. But I think my short story writing style comes a lot more from music that I listen to, specifically Laurie Anderson and the kind of storytelling she does. That's where that kind of wacky two-page stories that I did came from.

DRAW: Well, that's really interesting. I'm also a big fan of her work and of Stan Ridgeway and people like that.

PH: Oh, yeah. I love Stan too. They're storytellers and that really influenced me. And at the same time, I had this other track of my career going where I drew *Ghostbusters* for a long time for Now. And I drew back-ups in *Nexus* and *Badger*.

DRAW: Now what year is this? Late Eighties?

PH: Like early Nineties, late Eighties. I started to get super-hero work like a *Flash Annual* here and a *Namor Annual* there. Funny thing is that I always thought the short story stuff or the more artsy stuff was kind of an indulgence on my part and that the super-hero stuff was my real bread-and-butter.

RIGHT: A page from *The Wretch* inked by Ande Parks showing Hester's humorous and creepy take on a nun with a gun and her employer.

PREVIOUS PAGE, BOTTOM: The evolution of Hester's character designs for the Creep who underwent a name change becoming The Wretch.

THE WRETCH TM AND © 2004 PHIL HESTER



ABOVE: Milk does the body bad, from *The Wretch*.

I look back on that stuff now and the short story stuff is much better. It holds up to my standards now a lot better than the super-hero stuff does.

DRAW1: How would you say that affected your technique in the way that you work. The way that you approach your work obviously evolved from your first days, doing your very early indie work to the stuff you're doing now which is this very strong, bold, very geometric, a lot of design.

PH: I decided I had to get those two things together because it was starting to become, like when I would do a two-page story for *Taboo*, mentally more gratifying than doing a twelve-page story for *Namor*. But I still loved super-heroes and I thought, "Well, if I'm going to do that for a living, I've got to get something that speaks more about my identity than super-hero stuff so I have to combine these two things somehow. And at the same time, my tastes were expanding too. I was seeing a lot more Jose Munoz and bolder illustrators also—Caniff and guys that used a lot of black—and I was getting really into Toth and so high contrast styles were really appealing to me. And I thought, "Well, I've got to somehow, meld this weirdness that's really gratifying to me and the super-hero stuff that's also satisfying to me, I have to get them together." I think Ande and I have kind of pinpointed that moment as the mini-series we did for Dark Horse called *Freaks Amour* that adapted the Tom DeHaven novel. And it was sort of where I think we decided to quit messing around and get our own style.

DRAW1: To really walk out on a limb and to walk out on the stage and just do it the way you wanted

PH: Yeah, it was a pretty safe thing to do because that book had a really great page rate and we knew we were going to do it for 150 pages so why not try something new? And the work itself called for it, that it's really a dark and disturbing story. It called for something besides me trying, yet again, to draw like Don Newton [laughs] Because I had reached a point where I had figured out, "You know, I'm never going to look like Alan Davis. I gotta be myself." And though I still learn from guys like that, I still learn from Steve Rude and Paul Smith and all these guys that draw pretty. And I don't mean that in any derogatory sense because they make beautiful drawings. I mean, it's like trying to teach me how to slam dunk a basketball. I'm five-six. No matter how many days I spend in the gym, I'm not slam dunking a basketball. I'm also never going to draw an eyelash like Adam Hughes so I needed to find a voice that was my own and *Freaks Amour* was the beginning of that.

DRAW11

Many penciler and inker teams throughout the history of comics have sprung up like Kirby with Sinnott or Wood and it seems that sometimes that style of each would affect the other. Like, I think Sinnott actually did sort of effect the way Kirby penciled after a while. Did you feel the same way when you were working with Ande, that the way he inked your stuff affected the way you penciled?

PH: I've always felt the way Ande inks my stuff is the way I would ink it if I could ink. I'm not very pleased with the way I ink and I kind of see Ande as the ideal version of what I in the past could do if I actually tried to ink. And I think that in a way it hurt me because when I penciled things for other inkers, I already had this really good, symbiotic relationship with Ande already going and so I thought that all these other inkers would really be in sync with me.



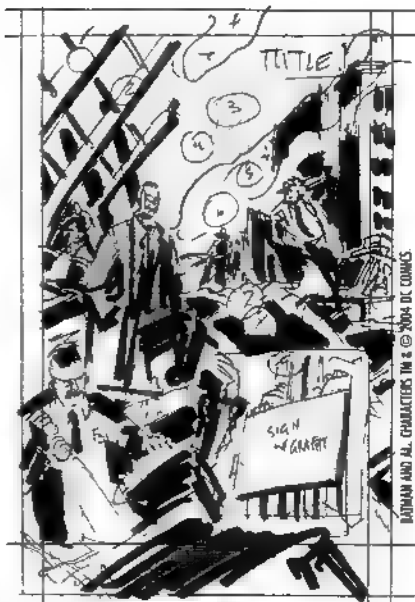
The cover to the second issue of *The Wretch*. THE WRETCH TM & © 2004 PHIL HESTER

A lot of times, they weren't A lot of times, they wanted to be really florid or illustrative when I was trying to be flat and graphic. Nothing against Scott Williams or that style of inking but any time an Image-type inker got ahold of me, I could just see, behind his eyeballs, this LED readout saying "Does not compute." [laughs] "Like, what is this flat triangle in the middle of every-

DRAW: You went through the chain and you came up through the trenches and then you started to really push to do your own things like *The Coffin* or *The Wretch*. How has working in the mainstream affected your process?

PH: I don't know. I think the number one thing you get from working in the mainstream is a sense of responsibility about your work, even if you're only doing it for yourself. You get this notion that you have to turn out work on time and it has to be of a certain standard. That's how we were able to get as many issues of *The Wretch* out as we did, even though it never made any money. We got ten issues out between two companies and I still owe Slave Labor issues of *The Wretch* that I intend to do someday. But I always saw the super-hero work as my job and the other stuff as my expression. Thankfully, the best part of my current work is that those things are starting to come together. I'm starting to be able to make the stuff that's satisfying artistically also be the stuff that's satisfying financially.

DRAW: So that would be something like *The Coffin*?



BATMAN AND AL. CHARACTERS TM & © 2004 DC COMICS



BATMAN AND AL. CHARACTERS TM & © 2004 DC COMICS



BATMAN TM & © 2004 DC COMICS

ABOVE: An example of Hester's dark and moody pencil work on *Detective Comics*: His layout including balloon placement and planning of blocks, and his finished penciled page.

LEFT: Another dynamic layout featuring the Dark Knight Detective.

PH: Yeah, *The Coffin* is the best example of that. *The Coffin*'s also the first thing I've done and didn't draw at all. I mean, I only thumbnailed it

DRAW: Okay, I wanted to talk about that. You've worked with Ande on his character Uncle Slam where he would sort of do rough layouts for you? Then you'd pencil from that since he was writing and inking the book.

PH: He would do balloon-kind of layouts, like little stick figure layouts.

DRAW: Just sort of like a pacing?

PH: Yeah, and then I would do really rough thumbnails for him and then he'd take it from there

DRAW: Okay, he'd blow your thumbnails up and finish the art? Pencil it.

PH: Right. And as for *The Coffin*, remember that really cool Dan Barry-Harvey Kurtzman *Flash Gordon* book? You know, those awesome Kurtzman layouts in the back, those thumbnails he did to write with, the same way he wrote his war stories, etc.? I just love those and I thought, "Man, if I ever write something, I want to write it that way." That's how I wrote *The Coffin*. The first issue was pretty tight thumbnails, actually, but by the last issue, they were very stick figure-ish. Mike Huddleston and I had worked out a really good relationship.

DRAW: Now, are you doing full scripts and then giving him layouts?

PH: No, what I give Mike are thumbnails and in the margins of the thumbnails, I'll write sort of Marvel style what's happening. You know, the way Kirby would put notes in the margins? I also send him a lettering script with the finished dialogue so he knows exactly what the characters are saying. So for every page of artwork he has to do, he gets a thumbnail with panel descriptions in it, a lettering script, and then he somehow spins it into gold.

DRAW: And then, when he pencils the pages, he sends them back to you and then you do the final script?

PH: We don't really change much. I mean we pretty much have everything set. But if he wants to change some pacing, or add a



ABOVE: Hester's dynamic pencils from *Detective Comics*.

shot or something, yeah, we'll change dialogue. But I don't do much writing after that. I correct mistakes but I don't bring new elements into the story

DRAW: So you would say, in a way, something like *The Coffin*, even though you're not really drawing it, it's still pretty close to a full Phil Hester vision. Even though the artist might have a different style, it's still your layout and your pacing.

PH I guess. I don't want to take anything away from Mike. But to me, the pacing and layout and the way panels are divided on a page for timing, etc., are so much of comic books that I can't imagine *not* doing that as a writer. I don't see how real writers do it. [laughs] I have to know how many panels are on a page, I have to know if they're set up in a vertical, staccato rhythm. I have to know those things because to me, that's the biggest and most gratifying part of comic books. I mean, drawing is fun but if I could lay out eight books a month, I'd rather do that than draw two. That's a lot more gratifying to me.

DRAW! So if you could write and lay out and find eight other pencilers who could—

PH Eight other chumps like Mike. [laughs]

DRAW! You still have that double path in your career where you started out on the independents, you ended up going to the mainstream and now you have one foot in the mainstream, whatever the mainstream is today.

PH If I'm drawing one of DC's top books, the mainstream has changed. [laughs]

DRAW! You're right, for the better. So you have your creator-owned projects and your mainstream projects, all at the same time.



THE HULK AND SPIDER-MAN TM & © 2004 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC.

THIS PAGE: Pencils by Hester, inks by Parks, from their run on *Ultimate Marvel Team-Up*.

PH: That was always my goal. I remember when Image was really popping and Rob Liefeld was twenty-three and that's a year younger than I was, and I thought, "Oh my God, he's twenty-three and he's a millionaire and he's drawing all these super-hero comics." And I'm doing *Ghostbusters* [laughs] and occasionally getting a neat story into *Taboo*. I thought, "No he's got a great career going but it's this really tightly focused one as a fancy super-hero artist." I didn't want that. I want to rise as a writer and as an indie artist and as a super hero artist, all those things at the same time. I wanted to be good at all those things. It's taken longer but it's finally happened.

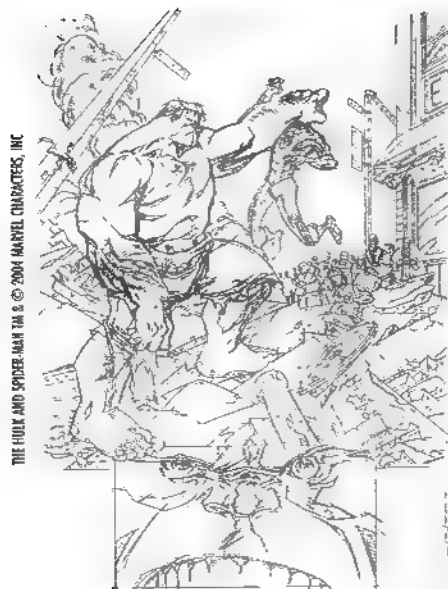
DRAW! Well it's much more satisfying now.

PH Yeah!

DRAW! Right. I mean, if you were twenty-three and you had it, you might, maybe—

PH: Yeah, I might never write anything. If somebody had come to me when I was eighteen, saying, "You're the greatest thing ever. Here's *Iron Man*," I might never have decided to write anything for myself and I'm glad that didn't happen. I mean, I wish I had a beachside resort and several Jaguars, but... [laughs]

DRAW! Well, it sounds like you may still get that because *The Coffin* has been optioned through James Cameron's company and I take it things are moving apace positively on that.



THE HULK AND SPIDER-MAN TM & © 2004 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC.



GREEN ARROW IS TM & © 2004 DC COMICS

ABOVE: The final inked page from *The Coffin* #1.

PH: Yeah, we have a director and we have a screenwriter

DRAW! And how involved with that are you?

PH: Not at all.

DRAW! Is that by choice?

PH: No, I think it's sort of mutual. I think they're like, "Hey kid, we're going to spend seventy million on this. We have to decide how it's going to go." And I'm sort of like, yeah, I make the comic book. I don't know anything about making movies. I think Mike and I decided early on because option talk started swirling about the book after #1 had just come out and we were still working on #2. So we said, "You know what? Let's forget about all that. Our best strategy for getting a cool movie is to make our comic as cool as possible, make it so cool that they'll want to

include as much of it as they can."

DRAW! So now when this started, this is through Oni, right?

PH: Yeah

DRAW! Oni has an agent then, I take it?

PH: Oni has sort of a Hollywood arm called Big Blast. That's Chip Mosher and we have an agent in Angela Cheng. They spend all their time really hustling, breaking their butts getting Oni's comic books in front of important people and it's really paid off. For such a small company to have so many things optioned is really amazing. I mean, all of Rucka's stuff is optioned; *Alison Dare*, I'm sure, will be very soon, and *The Coffin*. All their new stuff that's coming out has that potential too. And now that they've got this track record behind them, it makes it easier for them to sell things. Yeah, I can't thank Jamie, Joe and James enough for taking a chance on *The Coffin* and then working so hard to get it optioned and for being so hands off with the comic too, for respecting what Mike and I wanted to do.

DRAW! While that's all going on, you're working on *Green Arrow*.

PH: You may have heard of a little comic called *Green Arrow*. [laughs]

DRAW! And now you're working with Kevin Smith, so this is completely different than working on *The Coffin* where you're almost more of an author, where here—

PH: I'm the hired help. In a good way.

DRAW! How open or free are you and how does that affect your approach to the page since you're not the first guy to approach the pacing?

PH: Yeah, that's a good point because many times, I would stop and be so thankful that I had *The Coffin* to work on at the same time I was working on *Green Arrow* because *The Coffin* was all about page layout and pacing, and so is *Green Arrow*, but Kevin's work is so dialogue-specific. He's so good at it that it's something that has to really be looked after. You can't go Marvel style. Kevin doesn't call me and say, "This issue, *Green Arrow* fights an ape. Give me twenty-two pages," and hang up [laughs] No, he's got so many great lines planned out and so many twists and turns that he really has to control it like it's a screenplay. And to be honest, when I get the script from Kevin, they read like a screenplay, which is cool.

DRAW! Complete with panel breakdowns, page breakdowns?

PH: Yeah, he writes full scripts, just like every other DC writer.

DRAW! How does that affect you as a guy who's used to doing it yourself? Your natural sensibility clashes with his natural sensibility on how to tell a story.

PH: That's a different set of problems to solve and that's also satisfying in its own way. As an artist, there are moments you have to subsume your own ego and do what's best for the story. That means not having a spectacular, diagonal panel that cuts from the upper right hand to the lower left hand; hey, you've gotta get rid of that because you won't get the good joke between Batman and Green Arrow at the bottom of the page if you're doing that.

DRAW! I see. So is this his thinking of the whole page as a unit with a certain rhythm like music, or a certain beat? Is that how Kevin is approaching it?

PH: Yeah. I don't want to speak for him but, I think he sees the rhythm being set up in the dialogue, more than the visuals. I think it's our job just to get in sync with that and make sure nothing is competing with the dialogue. I mean, *Coffin* is satisfying because I can do whatever I want. *Green Arrow's* satisfying because I have to solve—I don't want to say "problems" because they're not bad things I have to solve, but

DRAW! Like solving math equations.

PH: Right, right. It's really fun because you get a script from Kevin and there are moments when you laugh just reading the script. That's all I can say when I get one is, "I hope I'm up to this. I hope I can get this across to people."

DRAW! That's interesting because I think every artist and every writer has an internal sense of timing that's just natural to them. So I think it's all about, to a certain extent sometimes, being able to find that happy compromise between your own internal sense of timing and your collaborator's internal sense of timing.

PH: Yeah, and I think that's almost a good thing with Kevin and I because I think very visually and Kevin thinks very aurally, in an auditory sense. And so I'm trying to make sure that what people see sort of jibes with what they're hearing and moves the story along.

DRAW! Do you lay the pages out and send it to him or does he get fully-penciled pages?

PH: He gets penciled pages back from me. Occasionally, he'll make a change here and there. Nothing horrible, though. He's been very easy to work with.

DRAW! Well, I think that's very interesting for people to see too. Often, when you're working on comics, like Marvel style, it really is up to you as the artist, you've really gotta pull the whole thing together. Like you say, sometimes you get the script that says "from page nine to twelve, all hell breaks loose."
[laughs]

PH: Yeah, big fight. [laughs] And I like to do that. It's fun to do. I mean, with *Green Arrow*, Kevin is such a good writer. And you see the same thing with Alan Moore or guys that really know what they want to do, who like to write full script. I guess it can be limiting as an artist, but when you know the work's really good, you happily will assume your role and do the work that serves the story. And I think that's important sometimes. There are comic books that have every page as a half-page splash and it's just a bunch of images competing for your attention. There's never any story being established. It creates the opposite of that.

DRAW! They're really not leading you or directing you.

PH: Yeah, they're just *there*.

DRAW! It's like a roller coaster where you have the ups and downs.

PH: They're all pushing to the front of the page. And with *Green Arrow*, it's a thrill ride and we're trying to move you along the track.



ABOVE: Layout by Hester from *The Crow*.



THE REVIEW #1-9, 2

REPORT LAYOUT OF 2-1, DO NOT DR. & IS
IN TWO LAY CLOTHES. BLACK BAR AT RIGHT IS COVERED
OF 5 PAGES OF THE FACING ANY FROM US
NOTE: NO PAIN BORDERS - LET NEGATIVE SPACE
DEFINE BORDERS - DON'T'S EXPRESSION IS
NOT PAIN, BUT RESIGNATION

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

DRAW: Now, let's talk a little bit about the nuts and bolts, which is what *DRAW*¹ is really all about. Let's talk a little bit about your craft and your day and how you approach the page. Do you have a specific system?

PH: Yes. Well, nowadays I do. You know, everybody's changes all the time. But I've had the same one for a while now that seems to be working pretty well. First, I take notes. Usually I'll scribble some shots on the script itself. When I see something that really inspires me, I'll jot it down on the actual script. I have a template of both a standard and a bleed comic book page that I've shrunk down on a typing paper-size. Six-and-a-half by nine border area. Then I just pencil like crazy on that, really quickly and loosely. Occasionally, I'll use a marker to spot blacks and I'll just be as loose and spontaneous as I can possibly be at that stage. Then I will also spot word balloons at that stage. I will take it and blow it up 150% and throw it on the lightbox and then blue-line it onto a normal Bristol and then pencil it



Hester's creative layout and notes to the artist Mike Huddleston and the final page.

DRAW! I see. So you don't use an Art-O-Graph to project it down, or anything like that?

PH No. You know, my whole career, like a lot of people, is a struggle to keep what's spontaneous and good about your early sketches alive to the finished drawings.

DRAW! The eternal struggle for every artist.

PH: And I've never done it. I always kill it and this seems to be the most effective way to preserve it. There's something really cool about when you photocopy something and you're blowing up marks and making them big, fat marks. You know, they start to lose some of their delicate sensibility and you to see that line like a compositional element and not as, "Oh, here's my beautiful feathered baby." [laughs] Instead, it's a slash and that helps me. So when I blue-line it, I blue-line really quickly I don't try to reproduce any sort of great drawing; I try to reproduce this sense of urgency and composition that my thumbnails had.

DRAW! So you're trying to nail your energy and composition?

PH: Yeah, I don't care about the drawing yet

DRAW! Okay, so you're trying to keep your drawing for actually drawing on the page as opposed to—like some people, and even myself sometimes—if I use my Art-O-Graph, I can project something down. I can actually just draw it right there.



THE CROW™ © 2004 JAMES O' BARZ



More layouts from *The Crow*.

PH See, Mike, when you can't draw, your problems are solved. [laughs] I don't care about that. I'm making a cartoon, so it's all about keeping that thumbnail alive as you make it bigger, just trying to keep that sense of urgency alive from the thumbnails. It takes me 30-45 minutes to thumbnail a page and then, only 5 to 10 minutes to blue-line it. I mean, really quick.

DRAW! And then how long to pencil a page?

PH It depends on the page, I guess. But like four or five hours.

DRAW! So what are you trying to do? A couple pages a day?

PH: I wish. I'm a house dad, so that's all gone. [laughs] When I was in college, and also when I was more willing to back, [laughs] I'd do four pages a day. But that's all changed, and I think even sitting down and drawing eight hours a day, two [pages] would be a great day

DRAW! So how do you split your day up? Do you do layouts in the morning, pencils at night?

PH: I watch the kids all day and when they go to bed, I start to draw. I start drawing at nine and what I try to do is save the penciling for when I'm most alert. [laughs] You can make mistakes that cost you. I remember when I was finishing Guy Davis on this series, *Brave Old World*. I was unking it at, I don't know, 3:30 am or something; I finished a panel and I realized I had no memory of doing it. It's a period piece, like turn of the century so all of the women have these ruffled, cuffs on their sleeves. And I looked down at the panel and all the men had them, too. [laughs] When I get tired, or when I'm first starting out, that's when I like to do my thumbnails, when you can be loose and fancy free

DRAW! So you feel that the thumbnails is the most important stage, right?

PH: Oh, yeah. Like I said before, if I could be like Harvey Kurtzman on the war books, that would be my dream come true, to just lay out everybody's book. [laughs] Make them do what I say. [laughs]

DRAW! Do you approach doing the DC stuff the same way, laying out?

PH: Yeah. I lay it out, small like that, and you especially have to do it on *Green Arrow* because there are a lot of balloons in *Green Arrow*.

DRAW! Now, how do you go about judging the size and the area to leave for the balloons? Do you do kind of rough lettering?

PANEL THINGS

Spish of Dr. Ahmed's lab as he, his assistant Liv Goldentrial, and a corporate manager named Lynde oversee their latest experiment: a dog in the coffin suit.

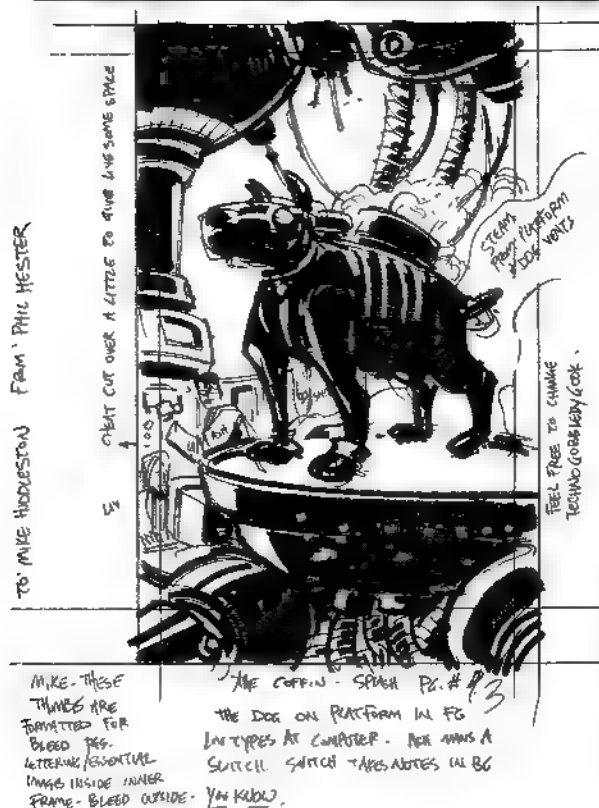
PANEL ONE

CAP. 1: 22 Hours ago.

BAL. 2: Ashar. Make a note. Liv. Tensile strength maintaining nicely but fire motor dropping off almost 12 percent.

BAL. 3: Ashar. Change rhythm alternating as expected. Layers 1.2 through 6.6 showing zero potential osmosis. CPU glitch free in hour 46.

FROM SCRIPT TO PRINT



ABOVE: Hester's script and then his layout and notes which are then faxes to the artist Huddleston who then proceeds to finish the page (shown at right) using Hester's layouts as a guide.

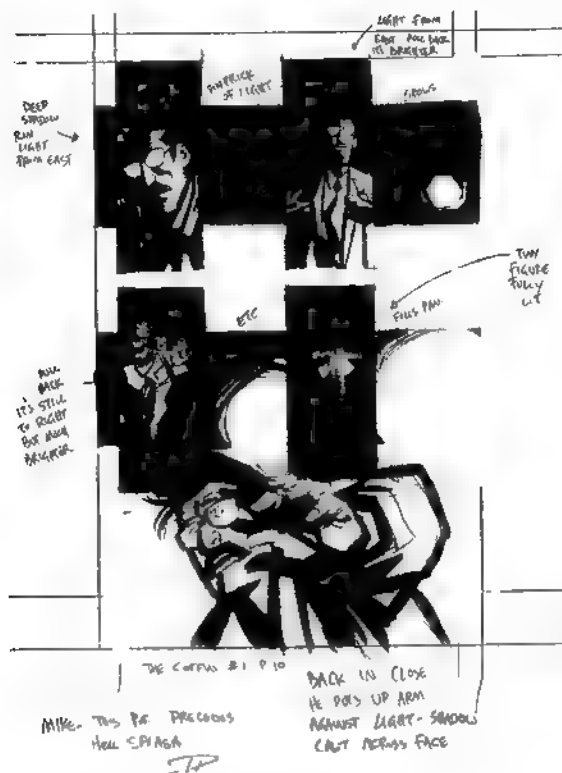
PH: Yeah. Since *Freaks Amour*, which was also very text-heavy, this is the first time I really had to think about it. You just have to leave the room for it. It makes me realize something, a little thing that I think it is the white elephant of comics that everyone just seems to ignore, which is the most important compositional element on any page is the word balloons. I mean, people hang on your word balloons a lot longer than they hang onto your pictures. I can have all these great theories about how I can spot

blacks or use these sympathetic parallels or tangents from panel to panel to keep people moving through the story and it does work, but only if you totally eliminate word balloons from your formula. You think, "Everyone's looking at my artwork," but it's not just that. They look at your word balloons even longer and I guess I still think about storytelling that way in moving people from panel to panel and directing the eye across the page. These days I think about it more in terms of support for word balloons, especially with *Green Arrow*. With Kevin's dialogue, those word balloons occupy so much physical space that I started doing stuff, like composing things in panel to direct people from one word balloon to the next and I never used to do that. I used to direct people from panel to panel and it's a neat little nuance that's come to my storytelling style that I'm probably the only person capable of detecting it. [laughs]

DRAW! Interesting. But when you were working "Marvel Style," from a plot on the *Ultimate Marvel Team-Up* stuff—

PH: The exact opposite, no word balloons. Bendis' actual directions to me were like, "this is a Hong Kong action movie so blow it open." And so we did.





THE CORNWALL IS TM & © 2004 PHIL HESTER AND MIKE HIDDLESTON

Rough by Hester and finished page by Hiddleston.

DRAW! So, how much information was given to you as far as how to break down the page in the plot?

PH: Bendis wrote full-script and I can't remember if he broke it into panels. He broke it into paragraphs with chunks of dialogue and it may have been panel to panel, I'm not sure. But he was a lot more open to me changing things and opening things up, as Marvel is in general

DRAW! I guess it's pretty much the opposite of *Green Arrow*. With the Hulk and Spider-Man, you've got guys jumping around and smashing stuff. That's pretty much what the Hulk is, it's all about him smashing stuff. Power

PH: Right, and the most important story point in any *Green Arrow* story is going to be a killer line that somebody delivers at some point. The most important part in that *Team-Up* story was the last image of the first issue which is the Hulk palming Spider-Man's head. That image is the most powerful part of the story and Bendis is really good at pegging powerful images and just let us go nuts and it worked I think.

DRAW! So in the last year or two, you've had a lot of experience in working in so many varied combinations to where you're laying out, you're the chief architect to where on Kevin's book, it sounds like you're more or less like a Director of Photography. It's all pretty much laid out for you.

PH: I'm the cinematographer on that book.

DRAW! And then on the Hulk thing, you're really much more like a director

PH: I think that's exactly right. I think there's more to it on Kevin's book than just making it look right. It's more like blocking a scene with Kevin's stuff, more like blocking a TV show and making sure everyone's standing in the right place and then still trying to get visually interesting things out of that. But, yeah, I sort of feel like I spent my whole career preparing for the stuff that I've got to do this year, revving up to this.

DRAW! And you were mentioning your "sympathetic parallel" theory

PH:—That's just B.S. I'm sure Will Eisner, or Scott McCloud have a real term for it, but it's picking up the rhythms from an earlier panel.

DRAW! So what's "sympathetic parallel"? Is this something that you developed on your own or something you read or what?

PH: No, you can see it in a lot of people's work. Gosh, I can't remember the name of the author of this book but there was this how-to cartooning book that I got when I was a kid and he had broken down some Neal Adams pages that way, showing how the compositional element in one panel would lead into another. And he did the same thing with some Caniff *Terry* strips and you'd have to be an idiot not to see rhythm in those things. A plane wing would push you directly into somebody's shoulders, or a horizon line, etc. I read a ton of *Steve Canyon* and *Terry* and stuff for a while too. I actually diagrammed that stuff

DRAW! That's probably a really good exercise. I know I've done that or sometimes, when I would lay out a page, if I wasn't sure about something, I would make a reduced Xerox and go take a big marker and work my blacks out and then say, "Okay, I need to change this panel here to add something." Like Kirby's work all has an S flow leading through the page.

PH: I actually did that on a *Captain Victory*. I took it out and I tried to ignore all the drawing and I just blocked in where he was putting shapes. And the pages were just awesome, even then.

DRAW! Yes, even when his drawing ability declined.

PH: Yeah, it was *Captain Victory* and not quite up to his normal standard of draftsmanship, but it still had more power than anybody else's stuff.

DRAW! Well, it's funny because in a way, I'm sure some people would think—or you could say with some artists, even as they get older and they lose a certain facility for the little details when what I'm falling back on is all the big elements of art: Composition, gesture, shape. Kirby was great with the negative shape and all that stuff in his work and it's just amazing. If you go back and study it over and over and over again, you find all these marvelous design elements in his work that you were not—

PH: You take for granted.

DRAW! Oh yeah, yeah. Now I go back and I look at how he did all those machines and his work is just so amazing on just a pure design level.

PH: I mean, he conceived things normal people don't conceive, just don't think of [chuckles]

DRAW! So when you're approaching laying out a page now, do you have these ideas in your head?

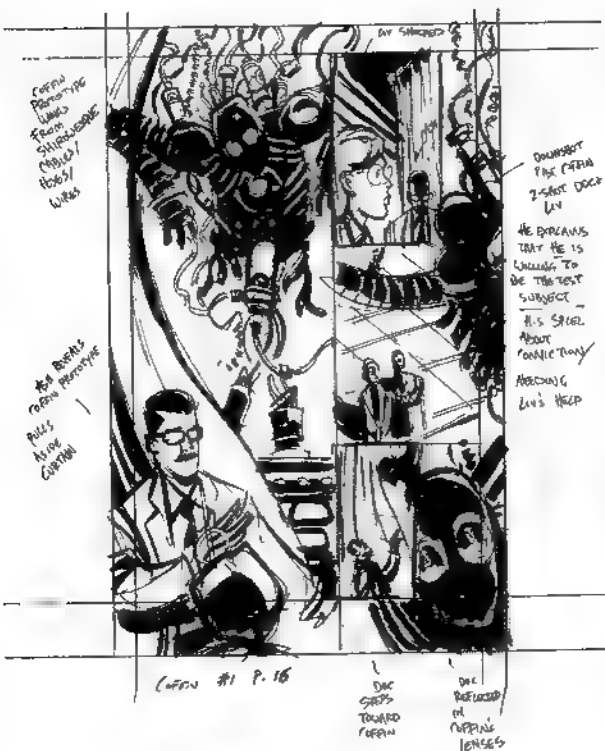
PH: I hope so. They're always crawling around in the back of my head and I don't want to beat anyone over the head with them and make them really obvious. Like having somebody's arm shoot through a panel and into the next one to make sure your eye goes that way. But if it looks like it's handy, if it looks like I can do that without manipulating things too much, I'll try to pick up the line of a black or of the gesture of a figure leading into the next panel and try to push the reader along.

DRAW! Do you have any other theories that you generally try to apply per page, like one little teeny figure then a big shot or a special effects shot?



ABOVE: Another page from *The Coffin* showing Hester's layout and Huddleston's finished art.

FEELING FEAR (CONFRONTED BY UNFOLDING :
PETALS, TUMBLING, MISTS OF BELLISH,
UNCONSCIOUS IMAGES TEARDROPS, SEA OF GUNS,
IMMORTAL, TOOTH, ETC YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO
BUT NOT ALTHOUGH THIS IS IF ON BOW OF SHIP
THE COFFIN #1 Pg. 1 (SPURK)



PH: There's a thing I always try to get away from which is making distinct elements of figures the same size on the same page and it comes from looking at a lot of Garcia Lopez, and he's the best at changing sizes on a page. He is a guy that can make a figure that's really only an eighth of a page tall seem like it's just immense because he would break it out of the grid. And yeah, there's this idea I've got that I think if you see a character the same size on the same page, the reader will unconsciously make a connection. The reader will establish this relationship in his mind between those two same-sized drawings. I'm not sure if that's an accurate theory or not but it's, I think, a potential problem.

DRAW! You think it breaks the flow?

PH: Right. If a reader sees a character the same size at the beginning of a page and the end of a page, they might imagine some sort of temporal relationship, thinking those two things are happening at the same time or those two things have the same importance.

DRAW! I agree and in fact, that's something I sort of picked up from looking at Kubert who would always wildly vary his camera angles, his layouts are so dynamic. He'd have those little toothpick people and then right up underneath somebody's nose.

PH: Yeah, that's something I have to work on. I don't do enough really ultra-long shots and that's something I need to force myself to do more. I got that impression because when you're doing a time cut—like if you're trying to show a change over time from panel to panel and it's virtually the same shot and you're just altering a few things to show the passage of time or the action of a character over time—they're the same size so you're establishing a temporal relationship with that same size ratio.

DRAW! Do you go through and lay out all the book at one time or work back and forth?

PH: Ideally, I would like to do that but I can't any more. I'm in such a time crunch that I just do page-by-page or I'll try to do a whole three or four-page scene at a time.

DRAW! Is that because you have to continually feed stuff to the next person?

PH: Yeah, we have to keep *Green Arrow* on time because it's an important comic book. But when I have all the time on Earth—like when I did a thing for Caliber called *Boneshaker*, it was sixty-some pages and I laid out the entire thing, like, one inch by two inch, to represent each page as one little rectangle. And I did it really simply. I established each panel as a bar of either light or dark to see what kind of rhythm was happening in the

LEFT: Another page from *The Coffin* showing Hester's layout and notes to Huddleston and the finished page.

whole story. I'm sure no one paid attention to that. [chuckles] I'm sure no one got that but it's something I did for my own sake, to show this rhythm that was kind of sea-sicky and... well, "sea-sicky" is not a very good word. It was kind of queasy and up and down at the beginning and then it got a little bit broader and then by the end, it was just blown wide open.

DRAWI: So you were trying, by the arrangement of elements, your blacks created an uneasy feeling within the reader?

PH: Yeah, all the way through the story, from the very beginning. The story started with four to six vertical panels on every page that were going up and down, up and down. And then, by the last installment of the serial, there's only one splash page in the whole comic and it was the climax I think, maybe, I had done a few half splashes before that. But it was a gradual change. It was like all vertical panels for the first couple of stories and then all horizontal panels at the end, where the splash is.

DRAWI: That's interesting too because in a way, the splash page is really sort of a convention of American comics. Over in Europe, they don't really always have splash pages.

PH: I purposely saved the splash because it was also a scene where the character broke the Fourth Wall and I wanted to save the splash for that moment. It really paid off, I think.

DRAWI: So then it had a double impact.

PH: Yeah, it was a really nice impact. And it was also one of the few pages that had almost no black on it because it was an extreme close-up of a character's face. He had a real doughy, white face and it kind of took up the whole page. It worked really well. I mean, I got it and of the five hundred people who bought it, maybe one or two got it too.

DRAWI: Now, you rough out in blue, do you prefer the rough or the smooth paper?

PH: Smooth. I don't care. Ande likes smooth. [laughs]

DRAWI: I see, okay.

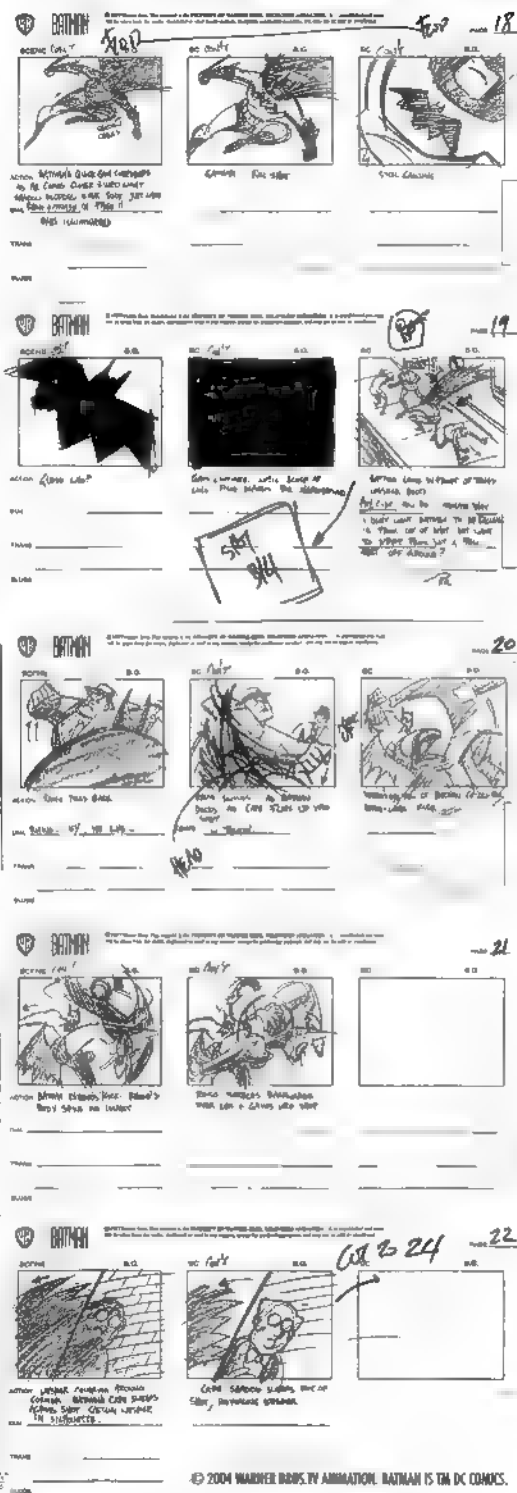
PH: I really don't care. I'd draw on a grocery bag. [laughs]

DRAWI: And then are you drawing with a 2B, HB?

PH: I was using F leads forever and I'm just now switching to the darker stuff, now that I think I have more confidence in my drawing.

RIGHT: Rough storyboards from *Batman* by Hester, complete with notes from director Curt Geda.

STORYBOARDS





You know, I'm using a lead holder right now and sometimes I'll switch back and forth. Sometimes I'll use a regular lead pencil, I'll use a Black Velvet which I think is a 2.5. But right now, I'm using a B lead in a holder

DRAWI: I've always found this to be interesting. Every artist has his or her own preference for material and how it's properties effect your technique. some artists use hard leads like 4H so the work won't smear

PH: That was a problem early in my career. Ande Parks would be saying, "God, you're leaving trenches in the paper." [laughs]

DRAWI: You'd really be pressing down hard?

PH: Yeah, I'd be really forceful because I thought that was ballsy drawing, [laughs] to draw tough, Hemingway drawing [laughs]

DRAWI: Real man drawing.

ABOVE: Park's characters Uncle Slam & Fire Dog written and inked by Parks, penciled by Hester. **RIGHT:** Hester's bounty hunter character Nails, written by him and Jason Caskey and inked by Parks, all from *Action Planet Comics* #1.

PH: Yeah. But the B is so dark that I can get a fast, dark, lively line with it and I like that. And I think there's an element to all this, that you switch to something else and you go, "Oh my God, how could I have ever used that other thing?" Then four months later, you switch back and, "Oh my God, how could I have ever switched?" I think every once in a while, you get stagnant and you switch just for change of pace

DRAWI: Do you still school yourself? Do you still study? Do you have a sketchbook?

PH: I wish. I mean, I sketch on loose paper all the time. I don't keep a sketchbook. I'm not disciplined enough. But when I need to solve a problem or I see something that I want to remember, I'll sketch it out on a piece of paper. But I don't keep a good, nice Steve Rude-like or Steve Lieber-like sketchbook. I throw my sketches away. [laughs]

DRAWI: Why do you throw them away? You should keep them.

PH: No, I couldn't. [laughs]

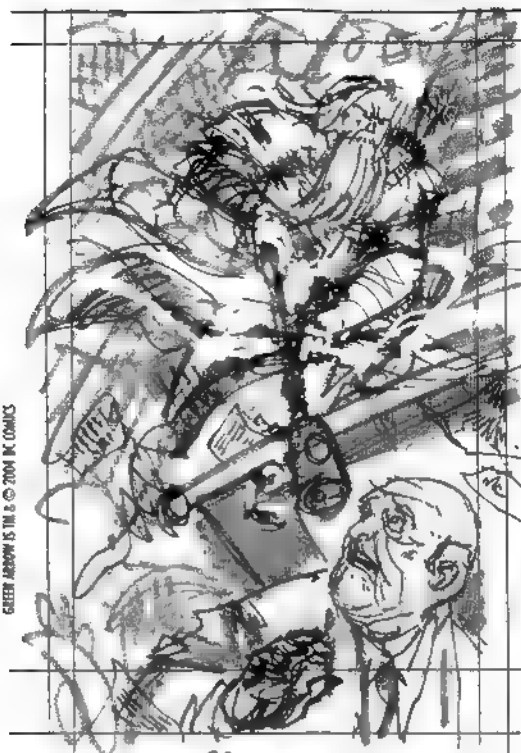
DRAWI: You could be like Blevins. Have stacks of them lying around.

PH: Obviously, you haven't seen them. [laughs]

DRAWI: Ah, I see.

PH: I spend so much time drawing that when I'm not drawing, I don't want to be near that sort of thing. When I'm not drawing





a comic book, I'm kind of like, "Ah, I need a break." One of the things I do miss from college days is Life Drawing. I love drawing from the model. And when I do my fine art, when I do my painting and my drawing, it's all is model-based. It's not literal, in any way, but it's always from a model.

DRAW: When was the last time you did that? Is that something you get back to every six months?

PH: I wish! I got so desperate for it that I was doing it from photographs for a while. But I haven't drawn from a model for a long time. I should. There's a little club here that does it. You can pay five bucks and drop in and draw from the model.

DRAW: Great.

PH: It always blew my mind when an editor would say, "You need more Life Drawing." I'm like, "I just spent 4 years in Life Drawing!" [laughs] In Life Drawing class, you're learning to make interpretations of the model in ways that can be abstracted or at least not exactly literal. When an editor says you need more Life Drawing, what they're really saying is, "Get a George Bridgman book or get a Loomis book."

I think that they might also be saying, "You need a vocabulary that's consistent," because with people like Ditko, his stuff is not exactly lifelike, even in terms of gestures and postures. But it's consistent. It's a consistent vocabulary. I think that if you can get that and stick with it, it plays.

DRAW: That's true.

PH: I think editors are trying to say that without knowing it. [laughs]

DRAW: Well, so many young guys when they come along, what they do is their styles are sort of built in a cannibal-like, Frankenstein sort of version where it's like a George Pérez head on a John Byrne body on a Frank Miller layout, where they're not really learning to observe the world around them and then abstract and define their own language. Everybody goes through that period in the beginning where you're very in fear of—

PH: A mish-mosh, and you need to hammer something out of that that's *you*.

DRAW: Right, which is what Life Drawing and things like that are really good at. Being able to help you learn how to self-generate and abstract the figure and understand it so you can do it.

PH: When you see somebody observe a cartoonist, somebody from the outside art world, I think that's the thing that blows their mind the most is to see how much a comic book artist self-generates. People from the fine arts are used to observing and recording what they're observing and interpreting it. And in comics, it's all about the vocabulary that's in your head.

DRAW: So, do you have any other theories or any other tried-and-true Phil Hester methods of approaching how you do a project, or do you vary it from project to project?

PH: I like to do something different with each new project. I'm deathly afraid of turning into a caricature of myself, a caricature of my own style. You know, I've seen it and you've seen it happen to so many guys.

DRAW: That means you're constantly taking means artistically to move ahead.

PH: I hope.

DRAW: It's like a shark, it's the swim-or-die kind of routine.

PH: I really hope.

DRAW: What do you have coming up in the future, now that we've talked about what you're currently doing?

PH: Well, we're going to continue on *Green Arrow* for, actually, quite a while, which is good to know.

Above: A layout from *Green Arrow* showing Hester working out his composition and blacks in markers.

DRAW! Do you foresee another year?

PH: I don't know for sure, exactly. I think Kevin's going to tell all the *Green Arrow* stories he wants to tell and that might take us ten more issues, it might take us twelve, I don't know. And then, well we'll get in trouble with Shreck if we talk about what we're going to do after that. [chuckles]

NOTE: DC recently announced that the GA team will be moving to *The Brave and the Bold* monthly in 2002.

DRAW! I see.

PH: Ande and I are going to get to stay together on a really cool project after that. And I'm going to write another book for Oni that Mike Huddleston's going to draw. I really need to talk about how great I think Huddleston is because I think he brings so much to *The Coffin*, things that I couldn't even dream of drawing, he can draw. Paintings that I couldn't dream of making, he can make. But we're going to collaborate again on a series for Oni that's similar in flavor to *The Coffin* but not exactly a sequel to *The Coffin*, called *Deep Sleeper*. Our agent's already bugging us about it, to get it done so they can take it out and shop it around Hollywood.

DRAW! Well, it always makes it easier to shop something once you've got the first thing done.

PH: That's what they tell me. I'm going to stay naive as long as possible. [laughs] I don't ever want to become one of those jaded Hollywood people

DRAW! Well, I think living in Iowa will probably make it hard to become a jaded Hollywood person.



GREEN ARROW © 2004 DC COMICS



GREEN ARROW © 2004 DC COMICS



GREEN ARROW © 2004 DC COMICS

Left and Above: The layouts and finished pages from *Green Arrow*. GREEN ARROW ARTWORK & SCRIPT © 2004 DC COMICS

PH: Yeah, I'm safe. We just now got *Oh, Brother, Where Art Thou*.

DRAW: So you're planning to maintain the mix between your own creator-owned projects and, hopefully, continuing the mainstream projects?

PH: Yeah, because I mean—don't get me wrong—I think *Green Arrow*, as an artist, it's the best gig in comics right now. You get to work with a great writer on a book that people are actually seeing and that's exciting. But there's nothing as fascinating as creating your own book, creating your own characters. And as long as I can afford to do that because I'm doing mainstream comics that fund my interest in either small-published or small press things. And, eventually, I have to get back to *The Wretch*. I swear to God, more people that actually read the book bug me about it at conventions. I got the numbers on the last issue and I know more people have asked me where the next issue is than bought the last issue. [laughs] I have a ton of things that I want to get done and I know I'm not going to get to them but, hopefully, if this commercial success continues for a while, I'll be able to afford to sit back and even make mini-comics if I wanted to of some of this stuff.

DRAW: You just have this urge to create comics?

PH: That's right. That's what I tell people. I'd do it if I had to make them at Kinko's and hand them out.



INTERVIEW WITH ANDE PARKS

Once dubbed the "gentleman inker of comics," **DRAW!** catches up with Parks, the other half of the Westar/Parks tag team.

DRAW: Why don't we start with a brief rundown on how you got into comics—the highlights.

ANDE PARKS: Unlike most of my friends in the business, I didn't draw much until high school. After a few futile years of college, I decided to try to do something I felt I'd really enjoy as a career. I was into comics and enjoyed drawing, so I went for it. I figured if, by the time I was 30 or so, I'd still be young enough to try something else if it didn't work out. I also thought that, since I was getting kind of a late start, I'd concentrate on inking. Looking back, I wish I had worked more on my drawing skills. It's hard to complain, since I've had a pretty good career as inker, but I wish I had some of those years back to work on becoming a better all-around artist.

Anyway, I started doing samples over whatever pencils I could get my hands on. I also hooked up with some pencilers in the Kansas City area. I went to every convention I could make it to, trying to get feedback wherever I could. I met Phil Hester at a show in Kansas City and we began doing some stuff together. I eventually picked up some jobs at small companies (Malibu, Innovation, and Megaton). I also hooked up with Mike Carlin at a convention. When I moved to the Philadelphia area in '91, you

[Mike Manley] were kind enough to let me tag along on one of your trips to New York, where I met with Carlin again. That meeting led to my first work at DC, inking an issue of *Action Comics* over Jackson Guice breakdowns. I really haven't been out of work much since.

DRAW: You and Phil have been working together for a long time. How many years has it been?

AP: I guess we met in 1989. He called me to ink a cover for a fanzine soon after we met. We were both happy with how that went, so we kept working together. We also became good friends along the way.

DRAW: Who were your influences as an inker?

AP: At first, I wanted to be Dick Giordano. I loved Neal Adams and the stuff he and Dick did together. I also admired how adaptable Dick could be. I liked Joe Rubinstein's work as well. Joe turned me on to Stan Drake, which really opened my eyes. From there I discovered all of the great strip guys. Raymond, Caniff, Prentice, and so on.

DRAW: Whom did you study?

AP: At first it was almost all Giordano. I had a page or two that Dick had inked and I studied them like a madman. I even looked at them on a lightbox! I wanted to ink everything with a brush, because that's what Dick did. Then I bought a few pages from Joe Rubinstein and I studied them a lot. Finally, I bought a couple of Stan Drake dailies, and just couldn't believe the guy! He was so casual, so perfect. Drake also turned me on to using a pen. Along the way, I picked up something from just about everything I saw. Hell, everyone was better than me, so why not?

DRAW: Did you get critiques from pros?

YIKES! Our heroes (and their character's) heads have become separated from their sensational bodies! Can you help them get it together?



Fun with
Phil and
Ande from
the *Action
Planet
Philly
Ashcan*.



UNCLE SLAM TM & © 2004 ANDE PARKS

AP: Yes. I started going to the Chicago convention in the late '80s, and talked to everyone I could find there. Rubinstein was especially giving and patient with me. Giordano was also very nice when I met him. I also remember pestering John Nyberg and Jerry Ordway. When I look back, it's amazing how nice guys already in the business were to me. I try to remember their example when I'm looking at samples at shows. Sometimes it's hard to focus and give a guy the attention he deserves in that chaotic convention atmosphere, but I try. It seems like the shows were a lot more manageable 10 or so years ago. Back when the Chicago show was held in a hotel, you could actually talk to the pros. Today you end up kind of yelling at people—trying to be heard over the roar of the show.

DRAW: You and Hester sort of rose up from the small press world into the mainstream as a team. Was this a planned partnership?

AP: I guess so. We definitely knew that we liked what we were able to produce as a team. The problem was getting a chance to work together on a book at a major company. It was frustrating for me to see Phil doing *Swamp Thing* without me, and it was sometimes frustrating to be inking guys I knew I wasn't as compatible with as I was with Phil. We always had something going on together, though. Often, it was our own stuff, but we were still a team. I think it took some time to convince editors that our stuff together wasn't too whacky for a mainstream book.

INKING DEMONSTRATION BY ANDE PARKS: STEP 1



The first step is to read the script. It may seem like it wouldn't matter, and usually it doesn't. My job, though is to help tell the story, so I like to know what's going on. This stuff was being lettered on overlays, so I wouldn't know what anybody's saying if I hadn't read the actual script.

They would often try to hire an inker to "mainstream" his work, whereas I try to preserve the stuff that is unique to Phil. You can't put a lot of feathering and pretty rendering on Phil's stuff. You have to keep it bold.

DRAWI: What was your first job together?

AP: The first piece we did was a fanzine cover. It was for a really good little magazine called *Comics Career Newsletter*. Our first whole comic was an issue of *Fringe*, a creator-owned book Phil was doing at Caliber.

DRAWI: Do you approach inking other artists differently? Hester's work is very stylistic and bold compared to someone, say like me who you've inked on occasion.

AP: I try to be pretty adaptable. It's sometimes hard, though, to approach someone else's stuff after inking Phil so much. I've discovered that it's hard for me to ink like I used to. On *Wonder Woman*, for example, I was using a lot of brush, trying to emulate Adam Hughes and Karl Story—real slick stuff. I got pretty good at it back then. If I tried to do that style now, though, it would probably be a mess. I inked a small job over Derec Aucoin last year. Derec's stuff is very tight and requires a lot of control. It was tough. I'm used to being able to cut loose a bit. Inking you or anyone else who inks their own stuff so well is always a bit frustrating. I end up second-guessing myself, thinking, "How would Mike be doing this?" Fortunately, I have Hester brainwashed into thinking that he can't ink himself.

DRAWI: Over time as you collaborated, would you say inking Hester's work has affected your inking process? I'm sure that when two artists work so closely together they sort of rub off on each other stylistically.

AP: Definitely. I can't speak for Phil, but he has clearly affected my work. Part of it is just osmosis. After seeing so much of Phil's stuff for such a long period of time, it just soaks in. But I also really respect what Phil does, so I'm genuinely interested in emulating some elements of his style. I can't draw like Phil, but I can try to be as good a storyteller. That includes layout, design, and spotting blacks.

DRAWI: How do you approach the page? Do you have any theories or steps you always start with? Do you analyze the artist's work at all before inking it?

STEP 2

The trick to inking Phil's stuff is to keep it clean and simple, but somehow make it lively. I went in with my Raphael brush (the #3) next. I can be more spontaneous with the brush, playing with dry brush here and there, and keeping the fabric loose. I didn't rule anything on this page. The only thing that might have been ruled would have been the bars in panel 1. It's a dungeon, though, so I just freehanded them with the brush. I went at this page first with the Hunt 102. I generally work from the top down, to avoid smears. I went through, inking whatever I thought I needed the pen for. In this case, I inked the faces, the smaller figures, some of the backgrounds, the glass cage in the first panel, and some of the fabric. I played some with the line weights, but I try not to beef anything up too much. We're lucky enough to be working with a good colorist on this book (Guy Major), and he knows how to pull things forward with color.



AP: My first priority is to preserve whatever makes the pencil interesting and unique. Sometimes it jumps out at you, sometimes you have to look pretty hard to find it, but it's almost always there. I don't want to obliterate the pencil. I just want to add a little bit of myself to the job. Sometimes that means helping with textures, sometimes it means playing with line weights, and sometimes you need to add blacks or tones. I also try to balance being clean with being lively. I don't want the stuff to look too labored or perfect. There are plenty of guys that do that already, and I just don't have it in me to be that anal.

When I get a job over a guy I haven't inked before I often either trace over some of the stuff with a pencil or ink a panel or two on some vellum. It helps me figure out where the guy is coming from—how he structures things and how he physically makes the marks.

DRAW: Give us a breakdown of your methods, tools, pens, brushes etc., and what you use each for.


AP: My main tools are a Hunt 102 nib, a Brause 511 nib, and Raphael brushes. I generally go through the page with the pen, doing whatever I feel requires that tool. That generally includes contour lines, small faces, details, most textures, etc. My goal is to leave as much as I can for the brush stage, because that's where I loosen up. I try not to use the brush in a way that makes me have to squint and try my damndest to make a perfect line. I prefer to slash around with the brush, keeping it loose. The pen gives me the control I need, and the brush keeps things lively. I really try to avoid outlining areas with the pen that I plan to fill with the brush. That seems too mechanical. I still do it quite a bit, but I try not to.

I alternate between the Hunt and the Brause nibs, more or less depending on my mood. The Brause has more bounce to it. I use Raphael series 8404 brushes, sizes 2 and 3.

Other than that, I have a few Rapidographs for ruling. I'll also use marker on occasion. I like the Staedtler Pigment Liners. I use the number 2 calligraphy marker for bushes, trees, and grass lately. You can turn it in your hand as you draw to get a lot of different lines and textures.

DRAW: And on top of inking you have also tried your hand at writing and penciling with your character Uncle Slam. Do you have any plans to return to that character or to do any more projects yourself where you will do more writing and drawing?

AP: I created a website for Slam (www.uncleslam.com), and posted three new pages there. The never-published third issue of *US&FD* is almost entirely done, except for inking and coloring, so I was planning on finishing that story and posting

it online. I got sidetracked about 8 months ago by a new project I want to write, and I'm afraid *Uncle Slam* has been languishing as I do research for that. It's a gangster book. I plan to write it and do finishes, with my pal Gordon Purcell doing layouts—much as Phil did with *Uncle Slam*. Hopefully, I'll find time soon to get back to *Slam*. I don't want to let the characters fade away completely. 

STEP 3

I went back and did a few more things with the pen: Small textures and background stuff. I kept the backgrounds pretty simple. Again, the colorist is good at doing subtle textures, and I find it gets overwhelming if I fill the backgrounds with too much detail. That just left erasing and a few minor touch-ups with whiteout. I use Pen-Opaque, which covers well but stays very liquid. Over most pencils, there would be one last step: Studying the page to see if it needs any blacks spotted. Placing blacks is one of Phil's strong points, so it's hardly ever needed with his stuff.



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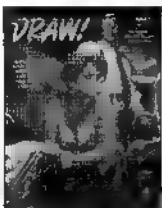
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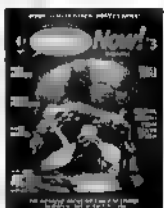
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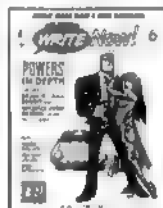
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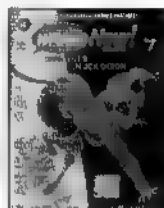
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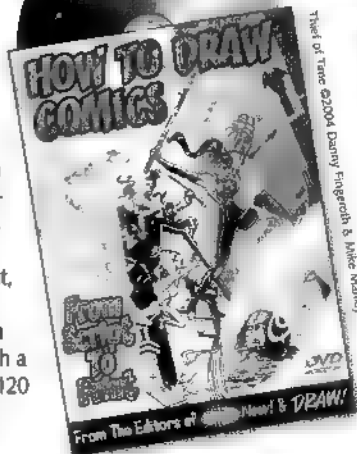
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THE POWER OF ORDWAY



Captain Marvel and Black Adam duke it out from the *Power of Shazam!* graphic novel.

CAPTAIN MARVEL, BLACK ADAM AND ARTWORK © 2004 DC COMICS

From his longterm runs on mainstream icons like Superman, to his heralded work on the *Power of Shazam!* hardcover graphic novel, to the series by the same name for DC Comics, to his just completed *US Agent* three issue mini-series for Marvel Comics, Jerry Ordway has stayed in demand and in the top echelon of the comics field. In

this issue of *DRAW!* we finish up our interview with Ordway and get a great look behind the scenes with this writer-artist, his working process and techniques.

INTERVIEW WITH JERRY ORDWAY, PART 2

DRAW! In the first interview with you in *DRAW!* #1, we left off at the inking stage of doing comic art, something which you really excel at, being to my mind and humble opinion one of the best ever in the business. And nothing against the many talented guys who've inked you, but no one inks you better than you. Your inking is "drawing in ink," as opposed to trying to make a series of really cool slick lines. Your inking is full of a variety of line weights and textures that not only describe the human form and the super-human form, but also make brick walls and sofas appealing to.

JERRY ORDWAY: Thanks a lot, really, but I'm neither as brilliant, or terrible as some think. There are days when I feel like I've lost the ability to draw, let me tell you! Comic work is so dependent on keeping your drawing muscles limber, that a weekend off can put you off your game. I took years off from drawing interior work following the *Power of Shazam!* graphic novel, with few exceptions. When I agreed to draw *Gog* for DC a few years later, I did so just to see if I could still do it, and on a monthly schedule. I survived, and succeeded, but just barely. Now it's a few years after that and I still am not up to speed compared to before my hiatus.

DRAW! So I guess my first questions will be more technical just to get that out of the way fast. What pen points do you use?

JO: Well, I started out using a Hunt #102 Crowquill tip, switched over to the Gillotte #659 crowquills, and am now back at #102s again, after twenty years, due first to the scarcity of the Gillotte's and then to the poor quality when I finally found them. Like every art tool known to us, none are as good as they used to be. The Hunt tips are not the inflexible "nails" I got used to so long ago, either. They are now closer in feel and flex to the #659 quill. Only inkers will get this, Mike—the rest of the world will think I'm talking gibberish.

DRAW! Are you primarily a pen or brush man?

JO: I am a pen man, with few exceptions. Occasionally, when inking a large drawing or cover, I'll use a brush, as an ink line would seem too "slight." I love doing textures with a brush, though. That Joe Sinnott rendering on rocks and debris from his Kirby days on the *Fantastic Four* is always inspiring. You need a brush to do that.

DRAWI: Do you have a particular way of working, say all the pen work first and brush work second?

JO: I generally do that, though there are times when I can't wait to fill in the black areas on a panel or something, and I'll get out the brush and finish it. I tend to work on a batch of pages, in order, leaving blacks to be spotted and erasing, until I'm ready to send the work in to the editor. Then I erase the pencils and go over everything, filling in solid areas and looking for places that need a beefed-up ink line to make the figures "pop," all the while watching the clock for the Fed-Ex pick-up deadline!

DRAWI: Do you prefer to use the pen for one type of inking, and the brush for another, like inking hair?

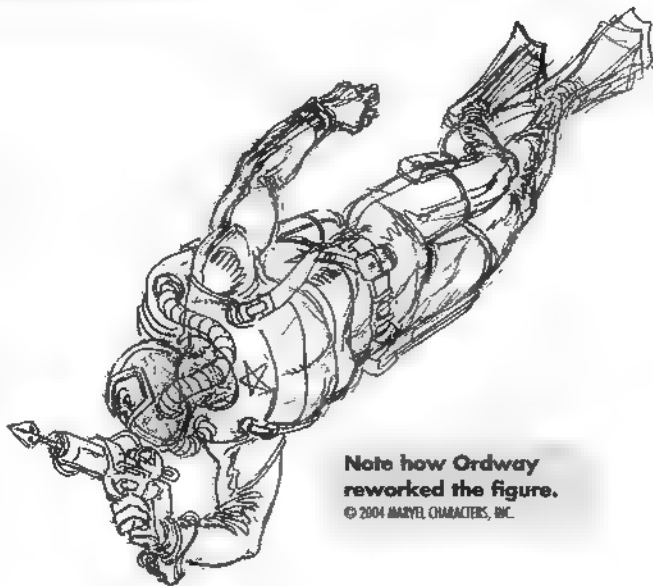
JO: Well, I struggled with that in the beginning, like most folks, trying to use pen for everything, until I learned that some things look better in brush, like the rock textures I mentioned before. Dark wavy hair, for example, needs a brush to keep you from trying to draw every single hair. A brush helps me pick out the highlights with feathering.

DRAWI: Who were the artists you learned from and emulated when you started?

JO: I started out trying to be Neal Adams, as inked by Tom Palmer, but two things conspired against me. First, in the late 1970s, there were dozens of artists trying the same thing, and second, it was an absolute low point in comic book printing. Even Tom Palmer's work wasn't reproducing well. In reaction to that, really, I looked to Wally Wood, whose work was simple and solid at the time. He kept the rendering to a minimum and spotted plenty of blacks to compensate for the generally weak coloring. When I got my first regular assignment, inking an Adams clone at the time, Rich Buckler, I stood out. I inked it in a simpler way. The book was *All-Star Squadron*, set in the 1940s, and Roy Thomas, the writer, made sure I was exposed to lots of great old work by Mort Meskin on "Johnny Quick," Joe Kubert on "Hawkman," Jack Burnley on "Starman." I also did a lot of swiping in ink of Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon* from the 1930s, transforming Buckler's figures into a more appropriate retro look.

RIGHT: Ordway's original cover sketch, paying tribute to the classic *Nick Fury* cover by Steranko.

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Note how Ordway reworked the figure.
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FAX TO TOM BRADDOCK FROM ORDWAY



COVERS - ILLUSTRATION QUALITY



ABOVE: The final inked cover.

As a kid, I was in awe of Wood and John Buscema. On *All-Star*, I studied the guys who inspired them, and added all sorts of rendering tricks into my repertoire from Hal Foster, Alex Raymond, Noel Sickles, Milton Caniff, Roy Crane and others. Then, after a while through repeat use, they became my own bag of tricks, so to speak. It was like comic book school. Doing a period book as your first ongoing title is quite the crash course—I had to draw and ink World War II-era soldiers, planes, boats, locales. It was really daunting, but a great experience.

DRAW: And whom do you admire today? I know I admire many artists whose style of craftsmanship wouldn't be necessarily compatible with my style.

JO: I think Carlos Pacheco and Alan Davis are terrific. I like Erik Larsen's dynamics. Bryan Hitch's work on *The Authority* was great. There are a lot of talented people out there. The competition is overwhelming, really. Gil Kane told me once how hard it was for him to compete with the level of drawing in the industry, and that really floored me, but I understood. In a way, though, as good as they are, I can't imagine anyone delivering a body of work as great as Hal Foster's or Raymond's or any of the greats from the past. I mean who among us can have the impact of a Jack Kirby, John Buscema or Wally Wood?

DRAW: Are you conscious of an "Ordway style" when working? Or is it more like handwriting? Automatic, unconscious.

JO: I think when you've been around a while, your work becomes like your signature. As much as I strive to get better, I am still following a certain path with my work.

I haven't abandoned my approach in a quest to stay contemporary, though I do keep abreast of trends. I know the risks, but I'd rather produce a cohesive body of work in a style I am trying to master than to try and reinvent myself every Leap Year in hopes of getting onto *Wizard's* top ten list.

DRAW! I ask this because I myself work in many styles, never seem to settle on just one particular style, and will alter my style depending on the job. Do you alter your approach, or have you ever felt the need or pressure to alter your style due to the prevailing wave of the Image style or the advancing wave of manga influence? With the past decade the change in inking style, or modern inking style, is very different from what I consider to be the post-WWII styles, or classic "Silver Age" style, we grew up on—the Sunnott or Giordano school, which came right out of the classic strips and the Alex Raymond school of inking. It's obvious and you mentioned being influenced by Wally Wood and he's surely in that "classic" school. Adams as well

JO: I have tried to inject more action into my Marvel work, as a nod to the house that "Jack" built, but the only time I consciously altered my style was on a ten page back-up I drew for First Comics—"Munden's Bar." I drew it in my regular way, but I rendered it in a more organic, Moebius type way. At the time, I had started sharing a studio with Pat Broderick, and Pat's own inking had that "noodly" vaguely European quality to it. Watching him work made me want to try that approach and, while I did it only one time, the experience did inspire me to be more organic in my inking after that.

DRAW! Also, have the coloring and modern printing effected your inking?



ABOVE: From the *Fairburn Book*, Ordway selected a character to base the expressions on Dudley (right)



CAPTAIN MARVEL, SHANA TM & © 2004 DC COMICS

**ABOVE:** Ordway's rough layout.**BELOW:** The finished inked page ready for color.

JO: Modern color is a bit overdone, in general, and fights with the rendering. Offset printing in comics is a godsend, though. It allows me to not have to worry about lines dropping out or breaking up. Pretty much whatever you ink will reproduce, and that's great.

DRAW! When inking someone else, how far do you feel comfortable in going as far as "enhancing" or changing someone's work? Often you ink guys who draw far more realistically than you do.

JO: I generally like to ink folks who expect me to add something to the work. Dan Jurgens, for example, has a nice energy in his layouts, but leaves plenty to do in the finishing stage. I prefer inking artists who don't draw like I do, for the variety I always enjoyed the team of Kirby and Wood, or Ditko and Wood because the combinations brought different things to the table than when they did their own stuff. I wished I'd gotten more opportunity to ink Gil Kane, because I know I'd learn a lot from doing it. I've learned from every person I've ever inked, and it made me a better penciler.

DRAW! Have you experimented with digital inking at all? Have you embraced the digital tablets and the digital work environment and methods?

JO: I haven't. I have worked with computers since 1988, but never warmed to their drawing environment. But then, in my carpentry work, I prefer hand tools over power tools. There's something magical in creating art with a scrap of paper and a pencil.

DRAW! Do you have any rules you follow when inking, secret techniques, or advice that you might wish to impart to our readers and especially the younger readers of *DRAW!*?

JO: Well, one rule I have is that I always start on page one, and work in order, not letting myself be seduced into inking a cool headshot on some page out of order. Never pick out all the cool shots and do them first, unless you have an assistant to do the rest of the job, because it will be painful to go back to those pages and have to ink all those buildings, and armies, and cars, etc. And if you ink out of sequence, it's harder for you to keep track of continuity within a story—the hero got a rip in his costume and you inked it unripped because the penciler forgot. Another thing, especially for younger artists, is not to be afraid to swipe a technique for drawing something you're stuck on. Inking trees? Look at how Foster did it, or whoever. In comics, you're expected to be able to handle whatever is put in front of you, but if a penciler's technique for drawing water is weak, look to those who came before you! Roy Crane in *Wash Tubbs* and in *Buz Sawyer*, was the master at rendering water! I still look at his technique when I'm drawing water scenes.



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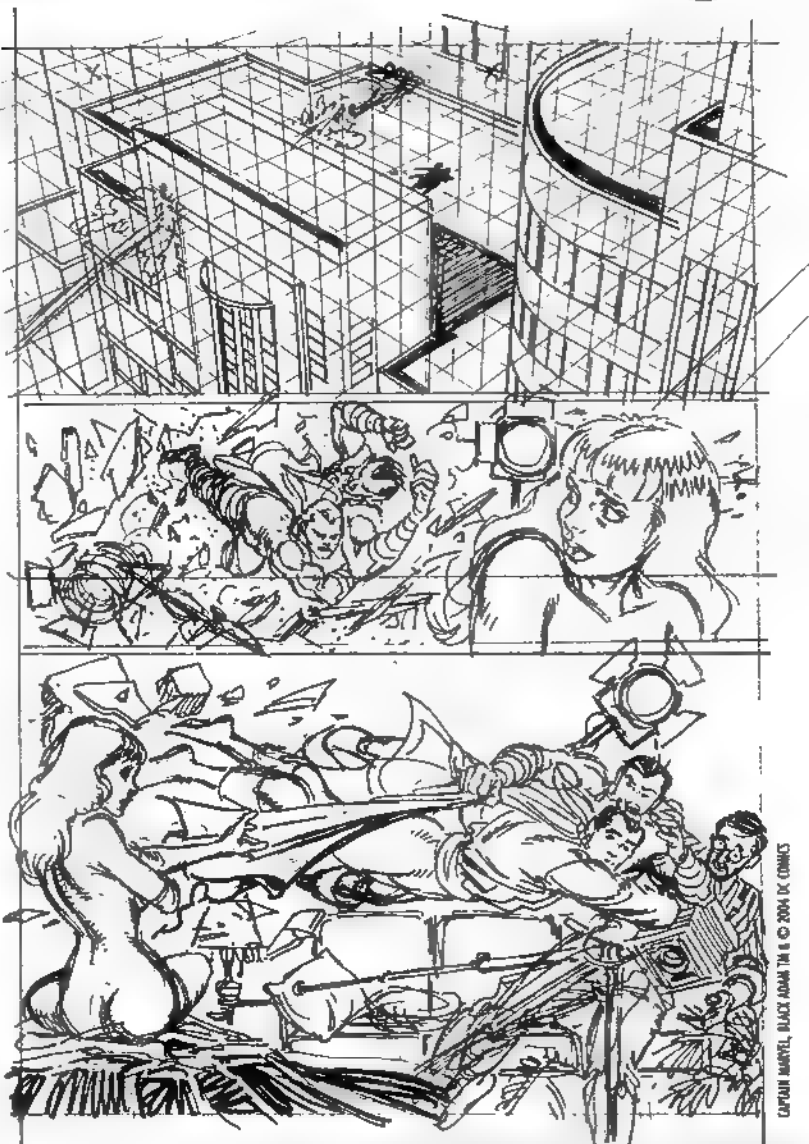
DRAW: Well now that we've discussed the inking we certainly can't neglect what had occupied a great deal of your time and skill in the past decade, *Shazam!* The graphic novel was certainly a milestone or highwater mark in your career. Just beautiful, and it really captured the charm of the C.C. Beck version and mixed it with the modern era. Did you ever consider doing it more "cartoony" like Beck's version, even more open?

JO: I don't think I would've tried. Beck's version made the mark. I had to do it my own way. Besides, I was trying to capture the feel of the serial adventures of Captain Marvel.

DRAW: When you were planning to do it, at what point did you decide to do it "painted" as opposed to the traditional way?

JO: Full color was agreed upon from the start, which was part of the lure to do it. DC wanted it done in the "blue-line" method, though, and I was set on full color illustration on the art boards. I also feared that, if done bluehne, with all the line art and lettering completed first, it would give DC an excuse to farm out color work if I fell behind schedule. This way, I was able to insure that I was the only one to touch it, going along a few pages at a time, in full color. Dale Crain, who is now DC's reprint editor, did a lot of work on production with the book, to insure that the printed book looked as close to the originals as possible. Using Doc Martin's transparent watercolors leaves you open to the camera's interpretation sometimes, as certain colors reflect more than others. Some yellows will photograph green if it's not carefully done.

DRAW: How familiar were you with working in other media like inks, wash, gouache, etc.?



ORDWAY: These layouts are the tighter layouts I did also at same size (print size). I enlarge them on my copy machine and lightbox them in ink—no pencil lines to gouge the paper or to smudge, or the watercolors wouldn't lay down smoothly. Even fingerprints can ruin color absorption.

ABOVE: The Betty Page gag is from a scene in Dave Steven's first *Rocketeer* storyline. I loved his work, and couldn't resist the comic in-joke.

JO: I had done quite a bit of painting and color work at a commercial art studio when I was a teen out of high school, so I was familiar with it. I also absorbed many techniques from the

lightbox in ink from layouts in order not to damage the paper, as you would do when erasing pencils after inks. This would've caused the colors to bleed, or not absorb right. So, I made a point of not needing to use any correction fluid, or white-out either, as they would affect the color phase as well. The few mistakes I made had to be painted out in opaque colors (gouache) and color matching was tough since opaques use white pigment to lighten them, while watercolors just use water.

DRAWI: What was your working method on the project? How did you go about doing the pages? How big did you work and in what media? Now that graphic novel led into the comic series, and you continued to do the covers.

JO: With the inked pages done in batches of four or five, I would set about painting with the Doc Martin's watercolors. I used a plastic palette with about ten reservoirs, and mixed my flesh tones, etc, and worked as quickly as I could. I wanted a saturated warm look to the Egypt sequence, while I made the introduction of Billy Batson in Fawcett City cool, in blues and such. I looked at the Max Fleischer Superman cartoons a lot, as well as classic Disney stuff, for color inspiration.

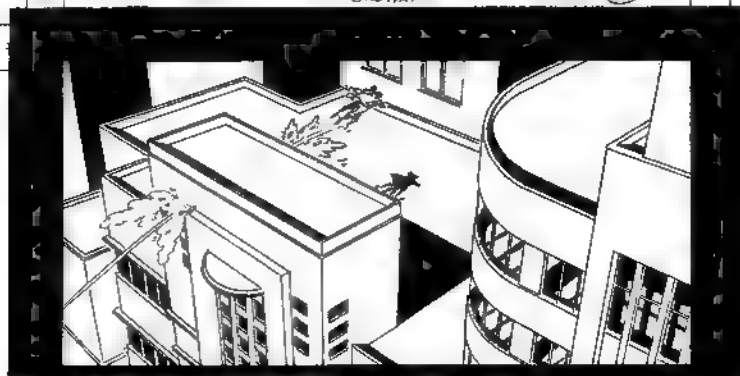
DRAWI: I noticed as you went along, you used less and less line or the convention of line, which doesn't exist in nature, to hold the contour of the figures. The covers became even more "painterly," one of my favorites being the cover you painted for the issue I drew, issue #17 I believe, featuring Mary Marvel being menaced by a monster in the foreground. You had more lost and found edges as you continued to produce the covers, and they were very rich in palette.

JO: On the regular series, I desperately wanted to do painted covers, but DC didn't have a budget for them. I did them for my regular line art page rate, plus the rate for a mechanical color guide, which was well below a painting rate. I also had to draw them in black ink so they could be reproduced in the distributors catalogs (color was a luxury for Diamond or Capitol Distributors!). I then would color the original the same way I did on the graphic novel, with watercolors, prismacolor pencils, and occasionally gouache. After about four

SHAZAM! HARDCOVER

ORDWAY

PAGE 78



seasoned pros who worked at that place, and used them on *Shazam!*

DRAWI: Did you do any experiments or try and plan out your style?

JO: I did one shot for the cover of my official proposal to DC in ink line with transparent watercolor. When I started on the art for the book, however, it was a learning experience. I had to

covers, DC appreciated my efforts and, bless them, they started paying me a revised rate—closer to the painting rate, but not quite. I also started drawing my so-called line art in pencil, and then photocopied them to convert it to a black line for the catalogs. Once I did that and got the raise (by issue #5), the paintings became more elaborate. It was a great experience.

DRAW! Did the classic Mac Raboy covers from the '40s of *Captain Marvel Jr* at all influence you?

JO: Oh, without a doubt. The Fawcett books back then had some remarkable painted covers, as well as the line art ones Raboy did. He deserves an archive reprinting of his Junior stories. That is fine work.

DRAW! Now while being a solid almost monthly workhorse for DC and recently Marvel, you also delved into the creator-owned arena with *WildStar* in partnership with Al Gordon, who did the inking, and *The Messenger*. *The Messenger* was done for my own anthology *Action Planet*.

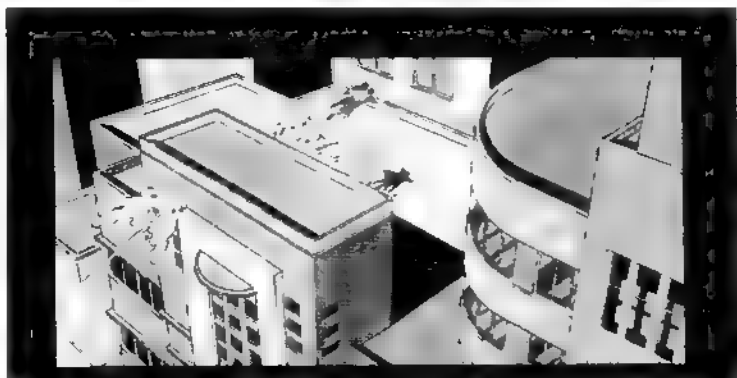
JO: Well, *WildStar* came around 1993, and was a great project, but with *The Messenger*, in 1998 I think, it was a true labor of love. It was a reinvented childhood creation, and I even lettered it.

DRAW! Now, working for yourself with little or no barriers and often no feedback as you toil in your studio can be very freeing, but sometimes sort of scary. Which direction do I run first? Did this freedom to do as you want effect your working habits or methods in any fashion?

JO: Well, I think I second guessed every line I put down, and without an editor yelling to get it done, I sort of indulged myself with all the time I needed. I did three eight page chapters for *Action Planet*, though only two were published there. That took like two years. Of course I was writing *Shazam!* at the time, so I had a day job.

DRAW! Did this grow out of any sense of frustration on your part creatively, working with the sometimes restrictive confines of the corporate comic industry?

JO: I really think I just wanted to contribute to *Action Planet* because it sounded like fun. It was also a neat challenge to tell a fairly complete story in eight pages. Beyond that, I didn't really do anything different except draw a hero who didn't wear a cape.

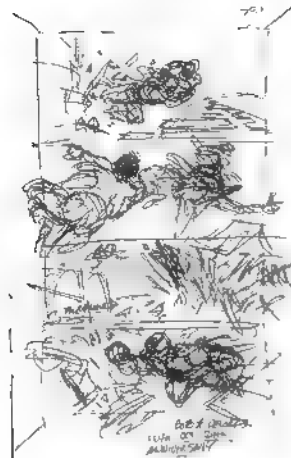


ABOVE: The final colored page.

DRAW! Was there any feeling on your part about wanting to establish an artistic identity separate from the corporate icons you have been associated with most of your career?

JO: I'm no rebel. I have made a good living working on corporate icons, and for the most part have been treated well for doing so. I just felt the need to draw my own comic. *WildStar* had been a taste of freedom, though I still had to work with a partner, so no decision was truly mine. With *The Messenger*, I handled it all, and finally completed the story started in *Action Planet* in a one-shot from Image last year. If there was at least the prospect of breaking even, I would do another in an instant, but I have a family to feed, and so, I need to make some money.

From rough layouts, to inks.



The final page colored.




ORDWAY: As I said, these pages were inked from the previous layouts, so I had to be careful—no white-out allowed—and I made it without a mistake, or did I? Also at the same time, I drew these as reproducible B&W pages because original editor Jon Peterson and I envisioned a regular flat color miniseries instead of a softcover edition.

DRAW! Do you have any plans to continue to develop properties and projects in the future?

JO: I have a couple of concepts in the works, but again, I need to find a way to afford to do them.

DRAW! And I guess we'll wrap up here with asking you what you have coming up and what you are currently working on?

JO: At the moment, I'm drawing an issue of *Just Imagine... Stan Lee creates the Justice League...* which is fun. I'm working for Carlin, so it's old home week, as he was my editor on *Superman* and the *Shazam!* series. He's also a friend and a good editor, so what's to complain about? I also just wrapped up writing and drawing a three-issue miniseries from Marvel, with the *USAgent*. 

SAMURAI JACK



From creating, producing and directing the hit cartoon *Dexter's Lab* to producing the mega-hit and 300-million-dollar merchandising phenom *The Powerpuff Girls*, Genndy Tartakovsky is the driving force behind some of the best and most popular (and Emmy winning) cartoons on the Cartoon Network—a growing cable titan which draws an average of 1.26 million viewers daily. From watching Tartakovsky's shows it's obvious that he loves and knows good cartoons, from the classic *Winners and MGM* cartoons to *UPA* and *Animobile* to the stylized art of *Disney* and *Mary Blair*.

DRAW! Editor Mike Manley interviewed Tartakovsky from his office in the Cartoon Network studios located in Hollywood just after the big premiere of his new show, *Samurai Jack*. Jack, a Samurai warrior, is thrown into the future by the demon Aku after a great battle. Landing in the far distant future, Jack searches for a way back to his time as he travels an Earth which is now controlled and run by Aku. The Earth is overrun by aliens and villains of all sorts. In his search for a way home Jack has many adventures, and using the ways of the Samurai, he helps many people who are also victims of Aku.



JACK

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARTOON NETWORK'S GENNDY TARTAKOVSKY

DRAW! So you were born in Moscow? And you moved to the States when you were seven with your brother, mom and dad, who was a dentist.

GENNDY TARTAKOVSKY: Yes.

DRAW! Where did you move to?

GT: We moved to Columbus, Ohio for about three years and then finally settled in Chicago where I mostly grew up.

DRAW! Did you read comics and watch cartoons at all in Moscow before you moved to the US?

GT: Yes. There were some but there wasn't anything like here. There were a couple of news programs, some variety programs and there was one cartoon that I can't remember. When I moved here, then it's like an explosion of entertainment, like *Super Friends* and all that, Hanna-Barbera shows, and *Wonder Woman* and *Batman*. Then I saw comic books and I saw they had so much to offer.

DRAW! So you saw the cartoon versions of the characters before you saw the comic book versions?

GT: Yeah, I first got into cartoons and like all kids, I was kind of in love with cartoons. Then I saw comic books for the first time and I was like, wow! I was into the super hero thing, so I bought up as many *Fantastic Fours* and *Captain Americas* and *Spider-Mans* as I could find.

DRAW! Were those the *Marvel's Greatest Comics* and the *Marvel Tales*? The classic reprints?

GT: The original stuff. This was back in the John Byrne run of *Fantastic Four*. I wasn't trying to buy the old Kirby stuff.

DRAW! So as a kid when you discovered comics, did you discover any local comic shops and did you go to a regular comic shop every week?

LEFT: Young Jack looks up at the demon Aku from the first episode rough storyboard by Tartakovsky.

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GT: Yeah, we had this place right in the neighborhood called Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. It was where I went and I would spend hours there looking at comics. We didn't have a lot of money and this was when comics were thirty-five cents so I'd buy a little bit here and there. I really liked to take my bike on weekends and ride around to all the garage sales and pick up as many comic books as I could at those places because those comics were ten cents, fifteen cents

DRAW: Same in the shop I used to visit, the owner would have a rack put aside where he'd have ten cent comics or fifteen cent comics that were kind of damaged so you could find all kinds of cool stuff there. So at that age, were you thinking, "Well, I want to be a cartoonist," or "I want to be a comic artist or animator"?

GT: Well, I couldn't draw very well and so I copied from comic books, but my brother who was two years older was actually better than me. I kept trying but it was definitely a struggle to draw when I was young. But I loved it and I kept doing it. Then I found myself a Senior in high school, and I loved animation and I still loved comic books. I decided what I wanted to do was to go to college. I didn't think that I could really make a living being an animator. This was in Chicago and there's no animation industry, so I was kind of sheltered and didn't realize that there's all this stuff going on in California. So I decided, well, I'll make animated films on the side and I'll go into advertising. I was aiming to do storyboards for commercials so I went to Columbia College straight out of high school. But in the first semester they had alphabetical registration. So my last name begins with a "T" and so every single class that I wanted to take was closed, full

DRAW: Aw, jeez.

GT: And you take your other classes, and the second semester you take the ones that were closed. I was like, "That sucks," so I saw this animation class and it would fill one of my elective credits "Oh, great. I'll take animation and learn more about it.



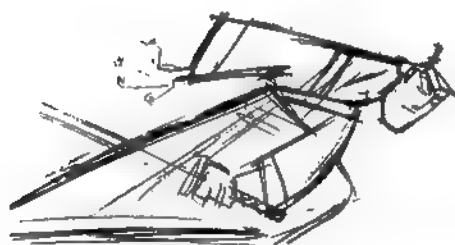
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ABOVE: City scape of the future Earth now run by Aku, designed by Dan Krall.

THE EVOLUTION OF A CHARACTER



FEWER LINE - KEEP SIMPLE, BIGGER,
BLOCKIER SHAPES.



BIG EYES - THE BIGGER THE BETTER
BECAUSE OF SELF COLOR LINES



ROUGH
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FRONT
VIEW

JUL 25 2000

ABOVE: In the course of developing the show the design of Jack underwent a variety of changes. Like a clay figure he was remolded and pushed, stretched, shrunk and altered by the designers and the storyboard artist pencils under Tartakovsky's direction until the final feel and design were arrived at. The goal was always to keep the design dynamic

yet simple, a very difficult and demanding process. The designs on the top of the page show the drawings from the storyboard artist that best captured the feel and helped define the character and the direction for all the artists working on the show, especially the storyboard artists.

I love animation, so I'll just fill a credit and learn more about my "hobby." I took the class and suddenly a whole new world opened up. You know, I really got into it and I was pretty good at it. I mean, I went to the top of my class in a couple of years. Then I decided to switch my major and study Film and Animation.

DRAW: They had a Film course at that college?

GT: Yeah, they had a Film department with a really small animation department. Like tiny.

DRAW: Now what year is this?

GT: This was '88 and '89.

DRAW: Did they give you the principles like the old "Squash and Stretch," the old Preston Blair kind of thing?

GT: Yeah, I just learned all the foundation stuff. I also took Life Drawing classes and all that kind of stuff, too.

DRAW: Were you still thinking that you would like to try comics at that point or had you pretty much decided you really wanted to go into animation?

GT: No, because I could see how good a draftsman you had to be for comics and comics purely relied on your skill as an artist. I would go to some of the mini-cons in Chicago and I would stand there and watch John Byrne draw for four hours and I knew that I was nowhere near anything as good as him to even attempt to make a career of that.



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Being a comic book artist seems even a harder career than animation because, I don't know, it just seems like it was even more unrealistic. [laughs] Because there's just so few comic book artists and it's only some who are successful.

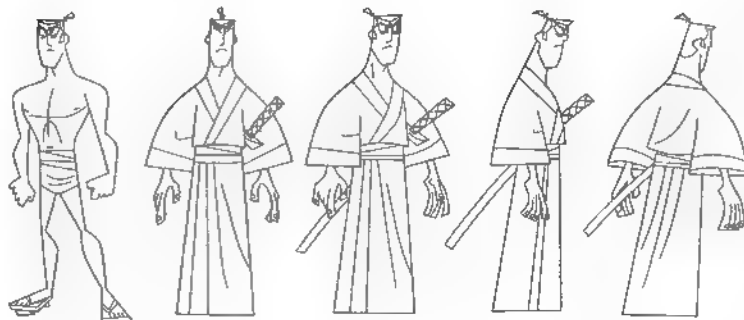
DRAW: Well, I think in animation, there is more specialization. You can find artists who are really good at doing backgrounds but are not good at doing people or are good at doing people and not good at doing something else, where in comics, you have to do everything well.

GT: True. And the passion that I had was more for animation, too. Even though I loved comics and I would become a better comic book artist if given the time, I still had this inner drive to make films.



SAMURAI
JACK

MAIN MODEL PACK



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DRAW: So, actually getting to do *Dexter* now as a cartoon, and doing the *Dexter* comics, you've sort of achieved both dreams.

GT: Yeah. I mean, when I got to do the first *Dexter* comic it was amazing. It was like a dream come true.

DRAW: And I know you just did the twenty-fifth issue and is that out yet?

GT: That's coming out in September.

DRAW: So now you graduated from college in Chicago, right?

GT: No. I finished two years in this college and then I realized that there was this college in California called The California Institute of Arts which is founded by Disney and has been around for a while.

TURNAROUNDS

And every single artist who is anybody, kind of, in the industry, went to this school and they also teach at the school. So I put together a portfolio and I sent it over and I don't know how, but somehow, I got accepted. So I moved down here and I went to Cal Arts for another two years.

DRAW!: When you went there, did you feel intimidated because there's all this history with it and all these other guys vying for the top spots?

GT: It was even more intense than that. Not only did it have this history, but when I showed up, I already had two years of school, so I felt confident, that I had already established myself. I'd been through this for two years and now I had to start all over. There were a lot of young kids and some people that were older than me. We did our first assignment and everybody put up their artwork on the wall. I walked into the room and started to look at everybody's assignments. Everybody was so far better, above where I was. I wasn't even in the same playing field as these guys.

DRAW!: Really. I mean, come on—

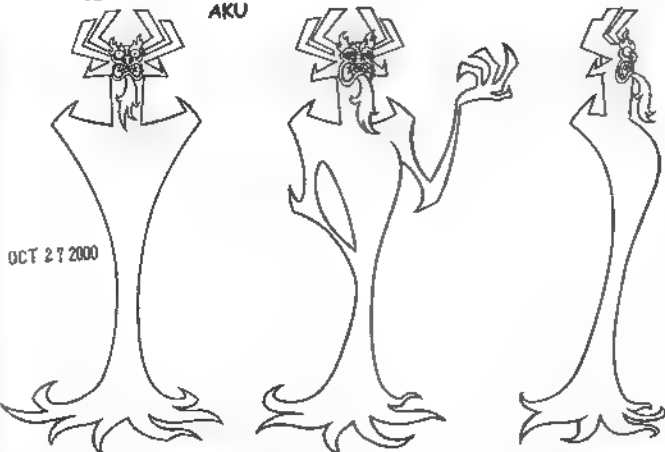
GT: I tell you, honestly. It was like I was the bottom five percent of the class. I saw all this drawing ability, because all of these kids were naturally talented. They've been drawing all their lives, their parents were artists, or whatever, and so it's all this natural talent. At Columbia, there were some kind of experimental filmmakers. Not everybody was into character animation. There were a lot of experimental films, a little bit of independent stuff, more like self-expression. But here at Cal Arts, it was like pure character-driven artists, animators, filmmakers and it was just like, oh my God; I was just completely blown away, completely intimidated because I could just see the difference. Even though I was confident about my stuff, I saw everybody else's stuff. I realized I have so much more to learn.



SAMURAI JACK

MAIN MODEL PACK

AKU



OCT 27 2000

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DRAW!: But instead of being crushed—like some artists would be like, “Well, that’s it. Forget it. I can’t hack it,” and drop out, the gauntlet was thrown down and you picked it up

GT: Right. That’s why I worked six times as hard as anybody else to break in, because I was obviously nowhere as good as these people were. I mean, I got better really fast because the teachers were really good and within a month, I felt I was already so much better. They just told me what I needed to hear and so I was able to make realizations about my drawing ability and about design.

DRAW!: So they would come to you and they could look at a drawing and say, “Oh well, there’s something off about the form here,” give you that piece of knowledge that you were sort of lacking on your own?

GT: Yeah, and also directional stuff and how to approach a drawing. Not even so much as the form, like thinking about a design and thinking about how shapes work together and the rhythm and stuff. Before, my drawings were just... how can I say it? They had no structure, no form, and I was kind of cheating from what I knew from comics.

DRAW!: So it sounds like they were stressing the whole design aspect as well as the fundamentals, which is very important obviously in comics but especially in animation because there’s guys in comics who don’t have the best grasp of anatomy, or whatever, but they’ll have some great technique. And in animation, you can’t fall back on that rendering.

LEFT AND ABOVE: Aku (which means evil in Japanese) is Jack’s main nemesis on the show. His body is able to morph and change into an endless variety of shapes.



SAMURAI JACK

MAIN MODEL PACK

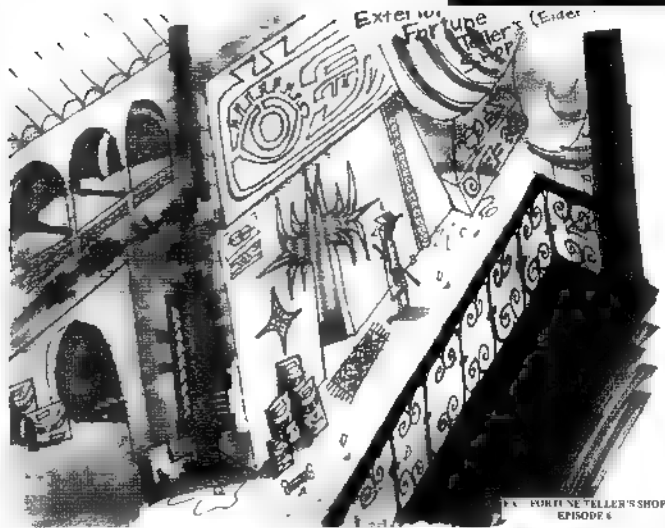
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AKU EXPRESSION



GT: And with animation, it was kind of the whole package: Your drawing, your ability to tell a story, your animation. One thing I still was confident about was my animation. I still knew the fundamentals of animation so I could move a character around even though the drawing of it wasn't so good. But I had a good timing sense, it was just the drawings I was struggling with.

DRAW: Do you think you had an innate sense of timing from just picking it up watching old cartoons. It was just something natural, or do you think that's something you really had to work at?

GT: I think it's from animating, from experience, and I've done a lot of analyzing of Tex Avery cartoons and Bob Clampett cartoons and live action films and just kind of



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slowly trying to figure out why do I laugh *here* beyond the funny face or the pie in the face, or whatever.

DRAW: So you were really into that early then. You were into analyzing the craft of cinema, the timing and all that.

GT: I was always into kind of figuring out why I'm feeling like this? For what reason?

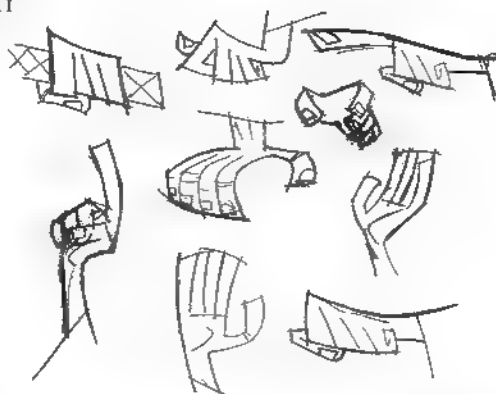
DRAW: I think that's pretty unique because a lot of guys sort of start out just wanting to draw or animate and they don't really get into that whole other aspect until, maybe, later on. In fact, some guys seem to never really get into that aspect of it. They're just happy to be able to draw great pictures.

GT: Absolutely, and for me, the whole thing was I wanted to communicate and I wanted to tell a joke. So I wanted the overall package. I didn't want to just do a funny drawing. I wanted to do a funny drawing with a funny movement, with a funny idea, so it would all come together.

DRAW: Okay. So now you were at Cal Arts for two years or four years?

MAIN MODEL PACK

P65A



JACK - HAND POSES

TOP: Background design by head background designer Dan Krall.

LEFT: Rough Jack drawing from a storyboard, and the "cleaned up" on model drawing sent overseas for the animators to follow.

ABOVE: Hand designs for Jack stressing a simple yet powerful construction and very clear and dynamic gestures. Hands are as important as faces in conveying the character's attitude and expression.



ABOVE: More backgrounds showing a ruined city that are given to the storyboard artist to use as reference when boarding that sequence. Designs by Dan Krall.

GT: Two years.

DRAW!: That's where you came up with *Dexter*?

GT: Yeah, for my second year student film, I did a two-and-a-half minute version of *Dexter*. And it wasn't even called "Dexter's Laboratory." It was called "Changes" and it was just this idea and I only animated barely half of it because I was trying to make a whole lot of really good scenes. That was sort of the basis for *Dexter*.

DRAW!: Now, in my research I read that you also had actually animated in Spain on the *Batman* cartoon.

GT: Yeah, my first job out of college was to be an animator in Spain. It was great because you want to jump at the chance to do animation and I was a fan of the original animated series. And so I went over there and that was one of the hardest things I ever had to do because I still didn't have full confidence in my drawing ability. To do those characters—I mean I wish I could do that job right now because I understand so much more about design. But back then, it was like, "Wow, these characters are so hard to draw and it's so simple looking but there's still so much to it." So we had layouts to go by as animators. I did the best I could and I did a few good scenes, I think.

DRAW!: So how did you get that job? Did you just read an ad, like, "Oh, hey So-and-so's looking for an animator in Spain?"

GT: No, actually, we had this kid who was from Spain and he was in my class and he invited these producers from a Spanish studio to come to what's called a "producer's show." At the end of each year, they pick some of the best of the top films and they show them in a screening. All the producers from around the country come and it's kind of like a recruitment screening. And so these people liked my cartoon and said, "We're doing *Batman*. Would you like to come up to Spain and we'll pay for

your apartment to animate?" I said "Okay, I'll see you there." [laughs]

DRAW!: And did you speak Spanish?

GT: Nope.

DRAW!: So you had to learn pretty quick, huh?

GT: Yeah, it was okay. I mean, animation's pretty universal, so it's like once you learn the words for "in-betweening," "good drawing," "bad drawing," "faster," "slower," it's pretty straightforward.

DRAW!: Was this on the first or second year of the animated series, do you remember?

GT: I think it was the second season. It might have been towards the end of the first season, then. It was part of the original sixty-five.

DRAW!: If we look in the credits, we'll see your name?

GT: I think it was just listed under studio.

DRAW!: How long were you there?

GT: I was there for about eight months.

DRAW!: Then, I guess the gig was over and...

GT: The studio went kind of bankrupt. [laughs] So I ended up moving back to California and then I worked in San Francisco for a while doing some commercial work. And then I moved back to LA and I got a job at Hanna-Barbera.

DRAW!: What years were these?

GT: In '92 I was in Spain and then '93 was at Hanna-Barbera.

DRAW! In this whole time since you graduated, you'd been working as an animator?

GT: Yeah,

DRAW! Were you doing any clean-up on your own stuff?

GT: No, I had clean-up artists, but when I worked in San Francisco, I worked as an Assistant Animator so I did clean-up of someone else's animation and I did a little bit of animation of my own

DRAW! Then from there, you started working at Hanna-Barbera and you were working on *Tiny Toons*?

GT: No, on *Two Stupid Dogs*.

DRAW! What were you doing there?

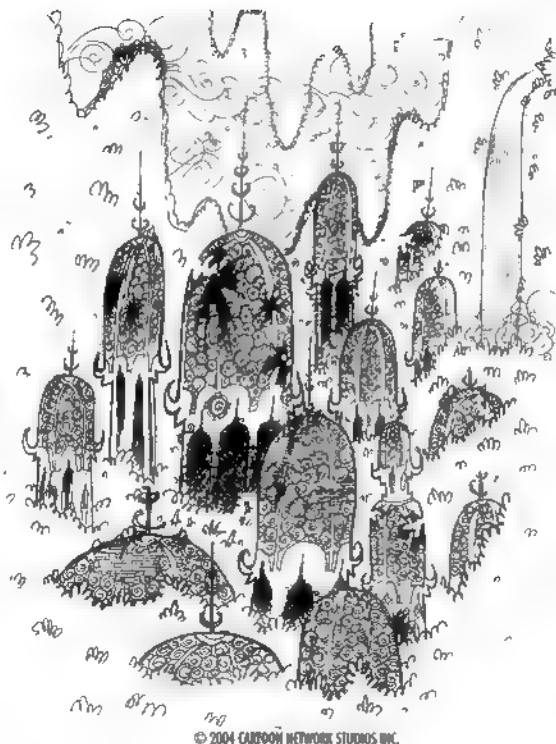
GT: I started as storyboard artist and then, for whatever reason, the producer really didn't like the storyboards that I did so I did some walk cycles of the characters and they liked that. So I started to move into animation directing.

DRAW! That's funny. They didn't like your boards so they promoted you to Director. [laughs]

GT: Yeah, it seems that everything that I thought was good about my storyboards, he always ended up editing out. So I never got to see if the stuff that I liked, that I thought would be entertaining, if it worked. So I lucked out with a big thing in my life and my career because once I got the chance to do *Dexter*, I decided I'm going to do it the way I always wanted to do a storyboard. If it fails, it fails, but I've tried it and here it is.

DRAW! Now, I know from working with you on *Samurai Jack*, I was surprised that how much—well, first of all, your boards are great. They're very strong, very expressive, great poses, very dynamic, but having worked in a lot of other places, doing boards, I noticed that your boards are not as—I don't know—I guess, anal, in a way. More loose, expressive. Because sometimes, I've worked at places where they really want all the start and stop poses, all the poses in-between. They want it tight like a layout. I know you're relying or leaning a little bit heavier on the layout guys overseas and the animators to trust their instincts and to follow the energy of the board drawings and staging.

ABOVE: Design for the Woolie city by Dan Krall.
RIGHT: Rough Jack from storyboard by Tartakovsky and the cleaned-up "on model" version for the overseas studios and animators. The idea is to get the storytelling, gesture and acting right in the storyboard first, then clean up the drawing later.



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GT: Well, often, you only see the boards in their first stage. Once we do the directing on them, when I direct the storyboard, everything like that is in there. So I have faith in the other people that follow you up from a storyboard prospectus. As long as the story's there, the expressions, the majority of the posing, it's all there and the start and hook-up poses and stuff, it's almost more technical than anything. It's not going to make or break a storyboard. So I'd rather focus on telling a good story and good posing rather than worrying about if I have to put hook-up poses for all this stuff.

DRAW! Is this because the animator has to figure all this out anyway?

GT: Right. The first instinct of an animator artist is to put the hook-up poses in.

DRAW! You really covered a lot of all the different disciplines coming up in your career, so that must really give you a lot of experience and strength to fall back on as a director.

GT: Yeah, that would also make one of my greatest advantages working here. When I came from Chicago, I made my own films, I shot my own films, I painted my own films, so I did everyone's job from start to finish. So I worked on an Oxbury camera, the whole thing, and I developed my own films. I put sound effects and music to my own films. [laughs] This is all back on film, so there is no Pro Tool's, or anything like that. So I could make a film from start to finish, by myself, if I had to. So I really was well-studied in how to make an animated film and what it took, all the different aspects of it.

DRAW! Well, I think that's obviously one of the reasons your vision is very clear and very strong on all the cartoons that you do. And there's very few creators in animation who when you're watching a cartoon, you can say, "Oh, that's a cartoon by so-and-so" I think that's great that you were able to do that and learn all the various disciplines. Because it seems that today, so many people coming along don't get the experience, don't get the chance to do that. They just sort of learn one thing.

GT: I was always told that if a storyboard artist could animate for a little while, it would so much make their boards better.

DRAW! Yeah, that's something, actually, I've always wanted to do. So now you're at Hanna-Barbera, and you're working on *Two Stupid Dogs* and you get to start directing. At what point does *Dexter* come back into the picture?

GT: So after I was working at Hanna-Barbera, I actually moved on to Film World and then I worked on *The Critic*, just for a little while. While I was there, one of my old producers, Larry Huber, who was a producer on *Two Stupid Dogs* called me and said he remembered my film because I got the job based on my film, my portfolio. He says, "Hey, Cartoon Network's

starting up this network of cartoons and they want to start doing little shorts, to see if they could go to series and stuff. I showed them your cartoon and they liked it and they want you to do a seven-minute storyboard." I was pretty miserable over at *The Critic*. I was in sheet timing and so I went, "Yeah, I'll do it." So I just did a seven-minute storyboard and I pitched it to the executives that were in this room and they liked it and they let me do a cartoon.

DRAW! Did you act it all out, with voices and everything?

GT: Yeah, I pitched the whole story with panels and doing the voices and everything else. Then we did the cartoon and they really liked it. The first one turned out pretty good. It got an Emmy nomination and won an Annie Award, so it did really well. So they gave me a second one and they gave me six more half-hours and then, the next thing you know, we're doing fifty-two half-hours.

DRAW! Then, from *Dexter*, you ended up working on *The Powerpuff Girls*, right?

GT: Yes. After we finish *Dexter*, the whole crew will be switched over to do *Powerpuff Girls*.

DEXTER'S LAB TM AND © 2004 CARTOON NETWORK



DRAW: Then you were sort of Producer Director on *Powerpuff*, right?

GT: Yeah, I was full in charge of timing and stuff and I did a lot of the post-production and I helped Craig wherever I could. He was more overlooking the storyboarding and I helped a little bit on that. I was more Producer and he was Supervising Director but I ended up directing a lot of that series myself

DRAW: Were you friends from being back in college together?

GT: Yeah.

DRAW: You sort of understood where each other was coming from?

GT: Basically, yeah. The thing about Craig and I is we really kind of complimented each other, because Craig's strength was the draftsmanship and the design skills and my strengths were the timing and some of the storyboarding and stuff. So on *Dexter*, I was able to let all of the designing and art direction duties go to Craig while I just concentrated on the boards and the timing. On *Powerpuff*, I concentrated on the timing and the post-production and he did more of the story and the writing

DRAW: And are you working at all on the *Powerpuff* movie?

GT: Yeah, I'll be animation directing it.

DRAW: On top of launching *Samurai Jack*.

GT: Yeah. [laughs]

DRAW: That's amazing. So now on to *Samurai Jack*. Was *Samurai Jack* an idea that you've had for a while? Did you have other ideas that you pitched along with *SJ* that didn't make the cut?

GT: No, actually, after I did *Dexter*, I was exhausted. You know, just completely burned out. And so the last thing on my mind was to create another series right away. So I kind of worked on *Powerpuff* for a while and halfway through *Powerpuff* I started thinking about, "Well, I'm kind of refreshed now." We just finished *Ego Trip*, the *Dexter* movie. I was feeling good. I was kind of ready to, maybe, do another project of my own. So I was really kind of dissatisfied with action shows. Just as a fan, I could never get enough of what I wanted from an action show.

DRAW: Which was what? More action? [laughs]

GT: More action and more unique stories, simpler, less dialogue, more expressive characters that I could really get into, and just cool and funny, and like that. Not dark and brooding all the time.

DRAW: So you don't feel in order that to be an action show, in order for it to be serious that it can't have humor in it?



LEFT and ABOVE: Two pages from the second issue of *Dexter's Lab*, penciled by Tartakovsky and inked by Bill Wray. DEXTER'S LAB TM AND © 2004 CAROON NETWORK

GT: Absolutely, yeah. Any show that takes itself so seriously becomes kind of hokey.

DRAW: Were you influenced by any of the anime stuff at all?

GT: I was a huge *Battle of the Planets* fan. That show was what an action show to me, was. It was a cool idea with flying bird characters. [laughs] And one of the great dynamics was that they argued with each other. That was one of my favorite things about the *Fantastic Fours*, especially the ones that Jack Kirby did, they always argued within themselves and that was a great dynamic. Not that Jack is anyone to argue with, but I just loved that idea. So one of my greatest inspirations, as far as anime, was *Battle of the Planets*. Then once I kind of got into development, I really started to get into the films of Miyazaki and some of the films of David Lean.

DRAW: For that big, spacious, epic quality?

GT: That quality and, also, they really made the background a character

DRAWI: Right. You notice right away on *Samurai Jack* the amazing, beautiful background designs and paintings and the colors that really just stand out. Quite often on TV the backgrounds are not as important. I mean, they're important to a certain extent but certainly not stressed as much. Not a character in a way that they are on *Jack*.

GT: Right. It all kind of came down to filmmaking with me. Because usually we are drawing these backgrounds and they'll just get a pan and then we'll just go into the next sequence. I wanted to do, maybe, a minute or two sequence of just establishing the environment. You really get to feel where Jack is and because it's such a fish-out-of-water story, the environment is such a big part of the story. It's like watching *Lawrence of Arabia*, you really feel that desert. And it's a really cool feeling and so I thought, "Ah, how much cooler would you feel if you're looking at these great drawings with this really unique color and a great mood?" You'd feel the landscape even more, instead of having someone walk through and do jibber-jabber talk the whole time

DRAWI: So you're not afraid to do a pan across something and to hold to get a mood, you don't feel like you have to cut-cut-cut like so many of those bad cartoons from the early '80s and '90s. They never held on anything for a second. No emotion, no drama. It was constantly cutting. You know, one person would say something and they'd immediately cut to somebody else. A terrible sense of pacing.

GT: All those cartoons were written, everything was very written. It was almost like animated sitcoms with a little bit of physical humor but definitely not relying on it.

DRAWI: So would you say that your films are more artist-driven as opposed to writer-driven?

GT: Yeah, I think the word "writer" itself is kind of a false word because the writer is considered the creator of the story. For us, that's kind of the storyboard guys. So in our credits, we have "written and storyboarded by". But there really is no writing, so to speak, the writing is done with the pictures and with the dialogue by the board artist.

DRAWI: Well, I have to tell you that was a very unique and invigorating experience for me, to get a page-and-a-half or two-page plot when working on *Samurai Jack* as opposed to getting a forty-five page script that is way overwritten as I have on some shows.

GT: Yeah. Rather than rotoscoping or caricaturing life or trying to get as close to live-action as we can in animation, my goal in animation and my career is to always caricature and make it our own. So we'll do a walk cycle or a run based on the way it feels, not because it's the *right anatomy* or the *right way* the muscles move.

DRAWI: I see. So you're looking to do it like caricature.

GT: Absolutely

DRAWI: I think, again, that's another thing that really makes your work stand out and also makes *Jack* stand out, too. I think Disney does it great but you can't do that on a TV time schedule. [laughs] There's just no way to do that.

GT: Right, and Disney still does realistic animation. They used to do, and they can do really good cartoony stuff but they don't. I mean, they're like the best animators, technical-wise. They know how to move the forms and to give weight to it. So they're the best animators from a technical standpoint. But to me, the old animators, the guys like Ken Harris, Bobo Cannon, Art Babbitt, the guys who did all the older stuff, the Warners cartoons, the Dick Sievers, the Preston Blairs, the Ray Pattersons, the Tom and Jerry stuff—that's what animation is to



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ADDITION
JAN 19 2001



Dogs - Seated around Jack
(S. 14)

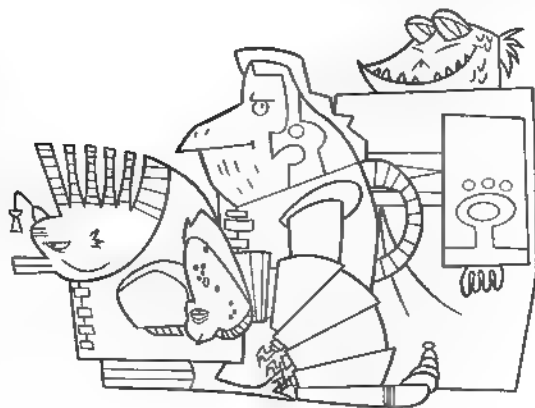
me. You know, completely unrealistic. Just cartoony, individual movement that they're having fun creating and animating

DRAWI: Well, it seems now that the whole drive in the industry seems to be, "Oh, we've got to do this CGI stuff now." A lot of people want to run around—which they do all the time in Hollywood anyway—and they either say something is "the king" or "the king is dead." The pendulum swings one way then the other. So now everyone's saying, "Oh, 2-D animation? It's dead. 3-D is it now." But the best 3-D stuff to me is not not done realistically. It's exaggerated.

ABOVE: A layout drawing from the first episode showing Jack and the dogs who enlist him to help gain their freedom from Aku.

A host of of sexy, grimy, and downright funny aliens, bounty hunters and dancing girls from the alien bar sequence in the first episode of *Samurai Jack*.

ALL CHARACTERS AND ARTWORK © 2004
CARTOON NETWORK STUDIOS INC.





35. THE CRANE'S

36. 35



THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

37. 36

GT: Like *Toy Story*

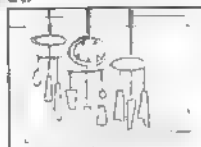
DRAW: Right, exactly. So do you feel, as a creator, any pressure from this?

GT: No, they know here at the network what we do and what kind of shows we're going to give them, so they're for it and they stand behind us 100%.

On the left you will see the final storyboard sequence from Episode 6 of *Samurai Jack* that was done by *DRAW!* editor Mike Manley. Since Manley was working from a plot as opposed to a script and he wasn't working in the Cartoon Network Studio, Manley would rough out his boards and fax them to director Tartakovsky. In phone conference and via fax they would go over changes.

Below is Manley's original rough for this sequence done at legal size, showing Jack entering the elder's store and meeting him. Manley originally included a daughter to help her elderly father which was later eliminated. The scene's tone was changed and was played more creepy, then funny as the elder pops into scene slightly startling Jack, who was eyeing the cooking chicken. This also played up the fact that Jack is always hungry, has no money to buy food and can't hunt in the city. It's subtle details like this which help define the character of Jack. Animation is a very collaborative process, and allowing the storyboard artist and director to work out details like this from a plot allows little gems of storytelling to shine. The final storyboard was done on 11"x17" paper.

ALL ARTWORK AND SAMURAI JACK TM AND © 2004 CARTOON NETWORK STUDIOS INC.



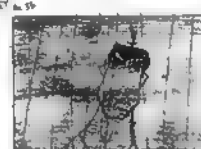
37. THE CRANE'S

38. 37



THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

39. 38



THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

40. 39



THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

41. 40



THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

42. 41



THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

43. 42



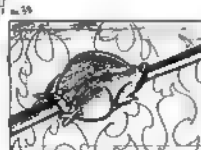
THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

44. 43



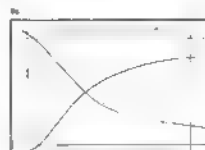
THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

45. 44



THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

46. 45



THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

47. 46



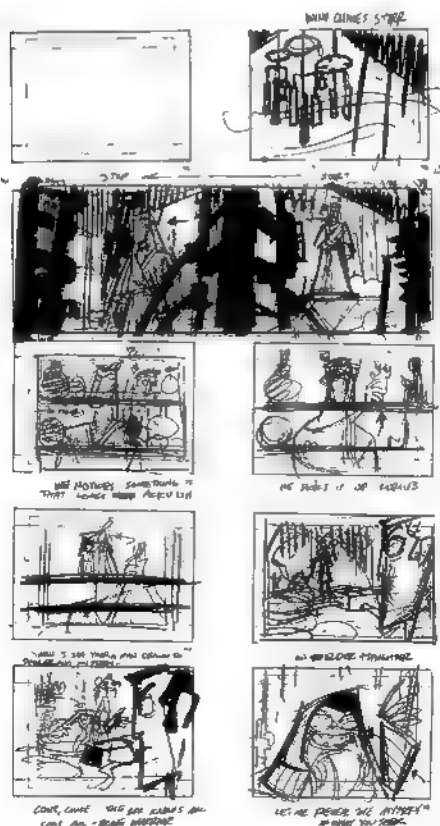
THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

48. 47



THEY UP A CRANE FEELS TO SHOW
JACK IN DEAD LINE

49. 48



DRAWI: That's great because it seems everything you read now is all about 3-D. That is, of course, until a couple of 3-D features come out and don't make a lot of money and they'll say, "Oh, 3-D sucks." [laughs]

GT: Right, and that's Hollywood. It'll go up and down with the trends. But you either follow the trends or you set the trends or you fail setting the trends. [laughs]

DRAWI: So you're now doing 39 episodes of *Samurai Jack* or 65?

GT: We're doing 39 but we'll probably end up doing 52.

DRAWI: And that will take you through a couple of seasons, right?

GT: It'll take us through four seasons.

DRAWI: Do you have anything else on your already amply full schedule or is this pretty much it for right now?

GT: This is it for now

DRAWI: Do you hope to push the envelope a little bit with *Samurai Jack*?

GT: Yeah, absolutely. From week to week from show to show, you're really not going to know what you're going to get next. You're either going to get this really great dramatic episode with this really great action, simple story and unique characters or you'll get something funnier and more light-hearted.

DRAWI: Do you get a lot of fan mail? Do you get a lot of kids writing in? I know a couple of kids who are absolutely obsessed with *Powerpuff Girls*. I mean, it's amazing. They love to draw them and it just seems that the style you guys are choosing just appeals to kids naturally. It just, somehow, goes right into the center of being a kid.

GT: Yeah, well we don't draw like this for kids. We draw like this because we're fans of the old UPA/Hanna-Barbera style, the more stylized stuff. So it's just what we like and if the kids like it, that's more power to us. That's the thing about making shows. You've got to be sincere. We can never go, "Well, I think kids like shows about cowboys so I'm going to make a cowboy show" [laughs] If it's going to come from a sincere place, it's going to feel it's sincere. With shows like *NASCAR Racers* and stuff like that, it's just people making shows to make a buck.

DRAWI: And kids react to that right away. They know if something is *trying* to be cool

GT: That's the thing. Kids are really smart and they pick up on that kind of stuff. The worst thing I remember about being a kid is watching some of those "Don't do drugs" shows where they

put all of the Warner Brothers characters and everybody's characters together and they all have this bad experience. You feel talked down to and you feel insulted as a kid.

DRAWI: Right. First of all, you know that they would never all exist together anyway so you already know that something's kind of off.

GT: Yeah, that just kinda panders to you and as long as I can make films, I'll always treat kids as adults and at the same intelligence level as I am.

DRAWI: Do you follow any of the Internet animation or web animation? Were you following any of that? Do you have any interest in any of the other things?

GT: No, the web animation stuff is more tricky. Where is the great character animation? I think it will eventually get to that point but it's kind of like cheap animation on the web. It's good for what it is and there's nothing wrong with it. But for me, I'm kind of a purist and a snob about animation.

DRAWI: So you wouldn't see yourself, at least for the time being, being involved in anything like that?

GT: No, and if I ever was to do web animation, I would do it traditionally and put it on the web rather than use Flash and cheat a lot of things. Again, there's nothing wrong with it and I know there's been some good stuff made. But for me, I'm still trying to make the animation that we do for television look good.

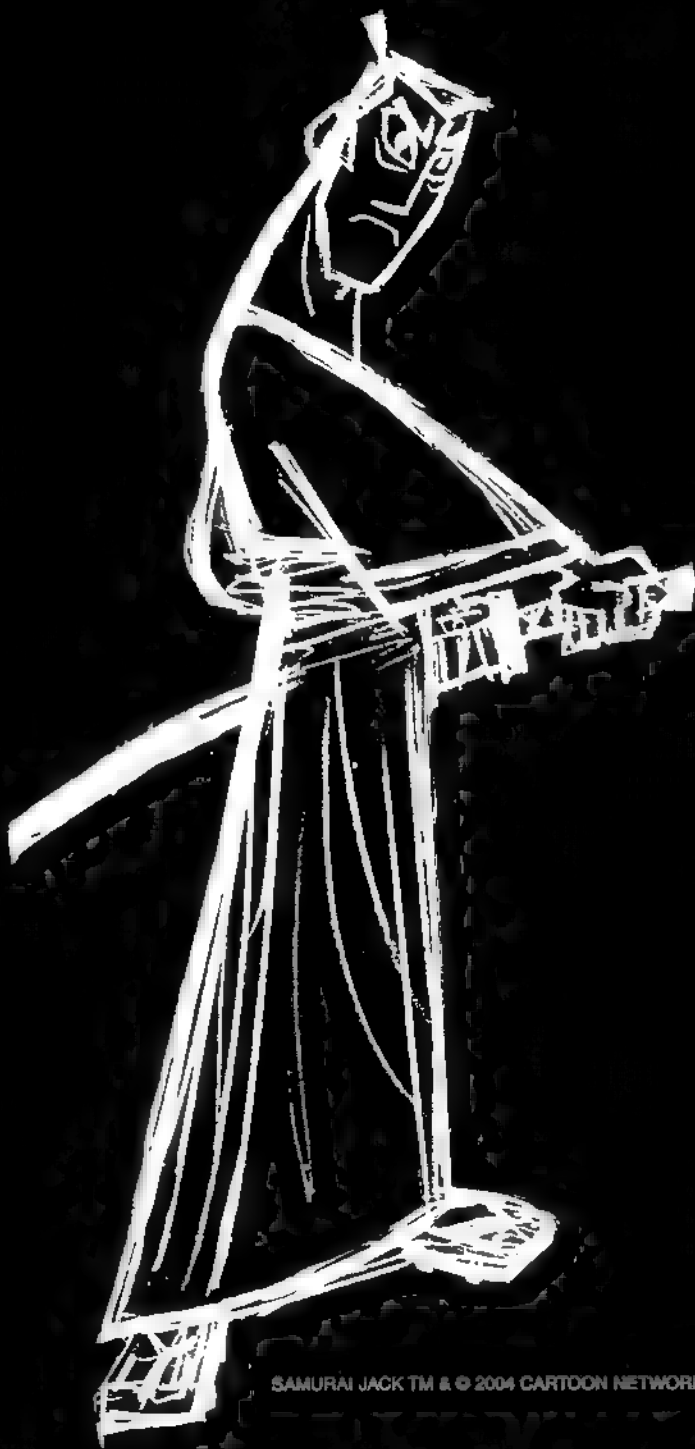
DRAWI: Flash still has a lot of bugs to be worked out. I mean, I've messed around with it myself and whenever you start to get complex, to where you want to do the character stuff, it really, really chugs. And you still have all the cross-platform problems, "Gee, I want to see this but no, I've got to download the plug," and "Oh, they don't make the plug-in for my computer so what do I do?" [laughs]

Is there going to be a *Samurai Jack* comic? Is that something you have interest in, of doing it something like the style of the show?

GT: Yeah, I've been kind of debating it. We might do an adaptation of the movie but we might just do it with digital grabs. But to do a regular series comic right now, I don't think anybody's been talking about it too much yet.

DRAWI: I just think it would be sort of cool, even do *Samurai Jack* in black-&-white or something.

GT: Yeah, definitely like the *Lone Wolf and Cubs* would be awesome. 



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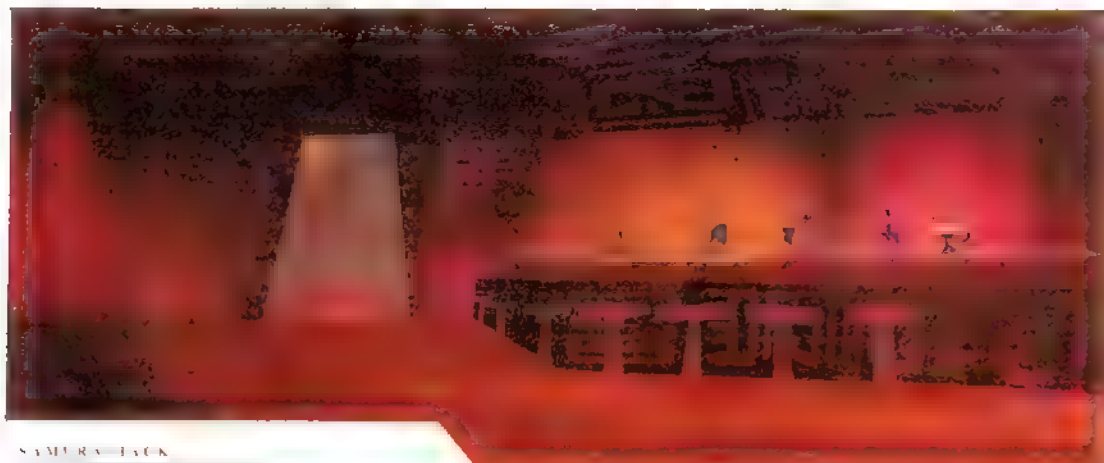
THIS PAGE: Some of the odd and alien characters that inhabit the future Earth of *Samurai Jack*.

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SAMURAI JACK

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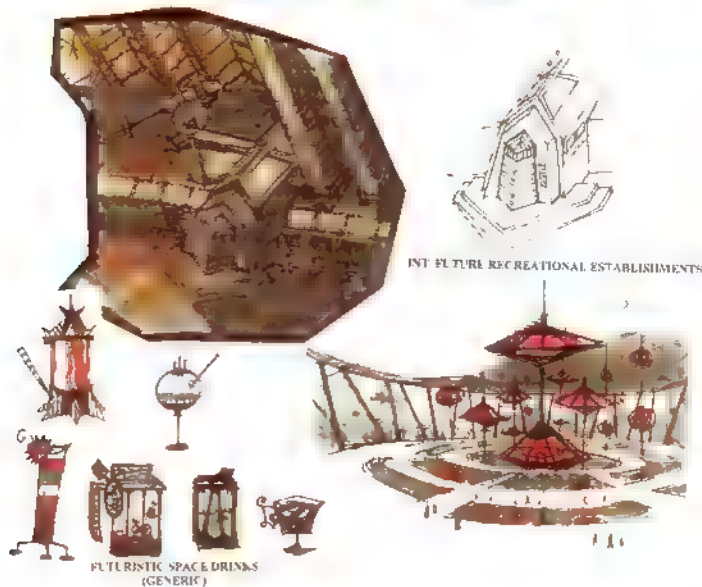
SAMURAI JACK

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THIS PAGE: Two background paintings by background supervisor Scott Wills.



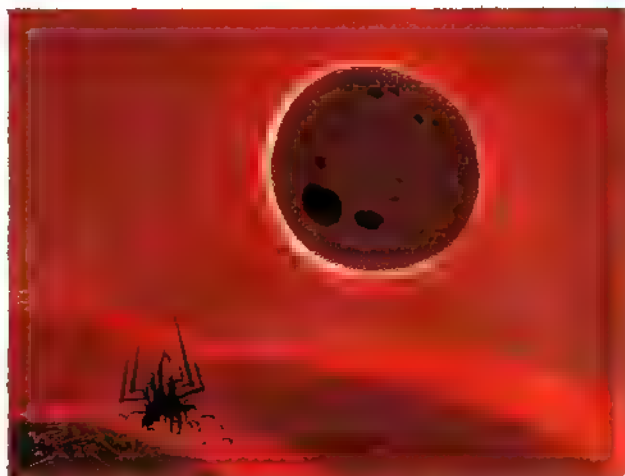
SAMURAI JACK
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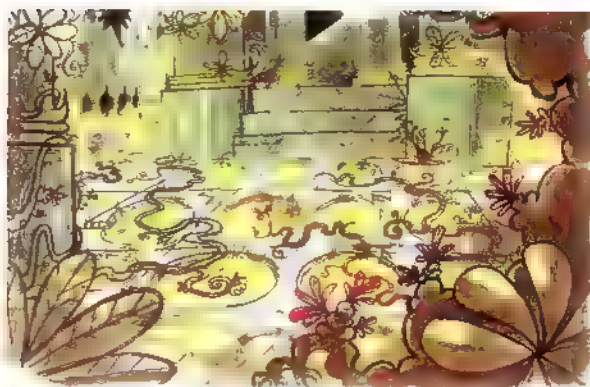
ABOVE: Two background designs by Dan Krall.
TOP RIGHT: Another background by Scott Wills.
RIGHT: A development drawing of Aku.



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EXT. ECLIPSE & AKU AS A TREE
EPISODE 1



INT. J. M. WATSON'S OFFICE
Episode 4

THIS PAGE: More *Samurai Jack* backgrounds.



EXT. JACK'S CASTLE
EPISODE 1

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FROM WEB COMICS TO PRINT COMICS A STEP-BY-STEP AND INTERVIEW WITH

THE ASTOUNDING STEVE CONLEY

Steve Conley has one foot standing in the past traditions of comics and sci-fi, and the other rushing or surfing toward the future of both mediums. From his own Eisner and Eagle award winning daily web comic, *Astounding Space Thrills* to his partnership with Rick Veitch in the 24-7 virtual comic book convention and destination portal comicon.com to the Toonarama web comic syndicate, Conley is an artist fully positioned at the nexus of the changing artform of comics.

DRAW! editor Mike Manley interviewed Conley from his busy Alexandria Virginia studio between juggling jobs for major clients like THQ, GTE and overseeing the several websites in the web empire he and Veitch share including The Splash daily news page and the ever busy message boards at comicon.com

STEP 1



DRAW! I guess the best place to start is to give us a little background on where you hail from and how you got interested in comics.

STEVE CONLEY: Sure. I'm originally from Long Island, New York. I was born smack dab between the moon landing and the birth of the Internet, in '69. And I've been drawing for as long as I can remember, drawing comics for as long as I can remember, reading comics as long as I can remember.

DRAW! You were drawing comics in grade school and high school, doing your own comics?

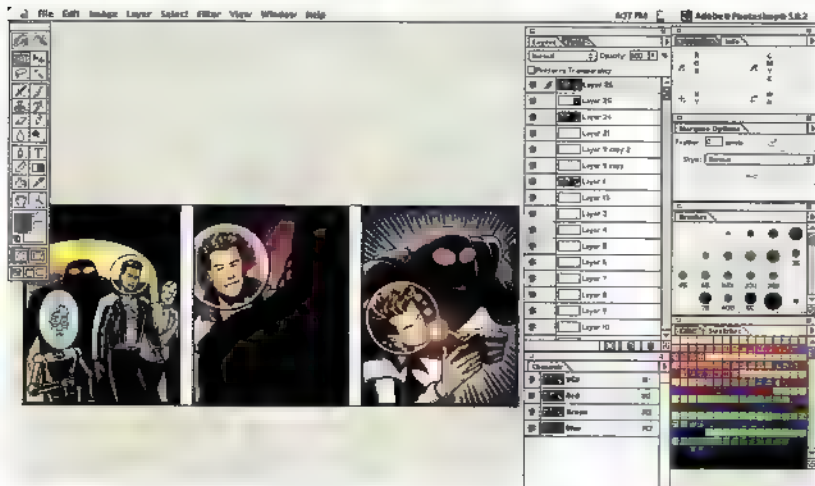
SC: Oddly enough, I don't ever really remember drawing other people's characters. I don't know how that relates to other self-publishers. I don't know if self-publishers always drew their own characters or if they were drawing Marvel's characters or DC's characters. I never found myself drawing Spider-Man or Superman. I was always drawing my own guys.

DRAW! That's interesting. You're saying that you were always drawing your own characters as opposed to drawing characters like the Thing or the Hulk or Captain America or whatever.

SC: Right.

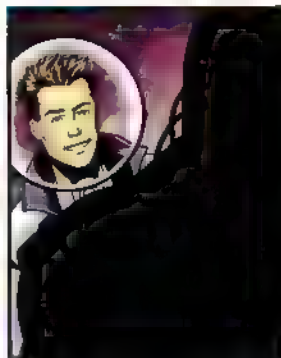
DRAW! Were you more interested in science-fiction or adventure?

SC: In the best sense, I think they're one and the same. I'm sure that having films like *Star Wars* but when I was six years old and having *Star Trek* in reruns when I was growing up helped a little bit.



TOP: Scan of the original ballpoint sketch for an installment of the *AST* online comic strip.

BOTTOM: The daily comics are colored in Adobe Photoshop. Each color shape starts on its own layer and the linework (as "inked" and imported from Macromedia FreeHand) resides on a layer above the color layers. The black linework layer is then set to "Multiply." This preserves the line quality and reduces the appearance of off-color pixels on the borders between colors. For the effect in panel 3, the entire comic strip is flattened onto a new layer (option-"Merge Visible Layers") and a small lens flare was added to the point of impact. © 2004 STEVE CONLEY



STEP 2

The top image shows the higher-resolution file as created in Photoshop. That image is then reduced to 72 DPI and brought into ImageReady for lettering and placement into the “tooncasting” framework of buttons and branding (seen below). In AST, the word balloons are translucent. “Word balloons are a very peculiar literary device and I wanted to see what I could do to mitigate their intrusiveness.”

© 2004 STEVE CONLEY

But I always dug comics. Fortunately, the first comics I ever had—growing up, I didn’t have a lot of money—I grew up in not the most well-to-do surroundings on Long Island. I mean, don’t think *Great Gatsby*. [laughs] Think Steve Buscemi film, something like that. I had a lot of the smaller, paperback versions of the Marvel comics. Remember when *Spider-Man* and *The Hulk* and the *Fantastic Four* were all reprinted in paperback size?

DRAW! Right, I have some of them. They’re great reprints, too

SC: Those are the comics I remember reading, devouring.

DRAW! So, as a teenager, you were obviously a fan of science-fiction, I take it, and reading science-fiction novels as well?

SC: A lot of Ray Bradbury. Really, any kind of material. I tended to like history better than I liked other subjects. Some of my favorite teachers were history teachers

DRAW! Really?

SC: They were just really terrific people. I think they understood the material and they were enthusiastic for it. I

remember math teachers appearing particularly uninterested in the work they were doing. I tend to think that if you’re good at math, the last thing you want to do over and over again is go over basic addition or geometry. [laughs]

DRAW! Probably.

SC: But a person who really loves history can probably find something of interest in going over the smallest event of the Civil War or something like that. Or the causes and ramifications of those events.

DRAW! Yeah, that’s true. Now, did this lead you into being interested in retro science-fiction, which is, of course, what *AST* is—sort of a combination. It’s like modern retro, where you take some of the really cool stuff or the iconic imagery of some of the retro science-fiction, but you’re doing it with a modern take. You’re not a slave to the past.

SC: I don’t know if I really grew out of anything or if it was just a reaction to things by the time. I produced a few comics in high school and in college, some super hero, some science-fiction. The first science-fiction comic strip I did in college was called *Anomaly* and it was about a Buck Rogers-type who ends up in a Mad Max-type future. It was full of weird animals and weird situations and lots of puns and was very goofy. Basically, one



ABOVE: Scan from a ballpoint pen “rough” of a page from the *Galaxy-Sized Astounding Space Thrills* (from Image Comics). The image is scanned at an average resolution of 150 DPI and saved as a TIFF.

RIGHT: The TIFF is then brought into Macromedia FreeHand and the linework is inked and the art is colored. “In the case of the *Galaxy-Sized* issue, it was the first time I worked to color the line as well as the fill of the shapes.” The colored page is exported as an EPS file for importing in Adobe Photoshop. “Occasionally, importing an EPS into Photoshop results in banding or faint parallel lines appearing in areas of gradient color. If that problem arises, I run the EPS through Adobe Acrobat, convert the file to PDF, and open the PDF in Photoshop.”

© 2004 STEVE CONLEY

character passed around my stories, it basically was Argosy, a character from *AST* it's always been that one character and at that time, it was just *Anomaly*. And then there was a story I had after that called *Vanguardian*. That's a really goofy name. Like “vanguard” and then “guardian.” It was totally horsey but it was essentially *Les Misérables* with super-powers.

DRAWI: Now, what year is this?

SC: That would have been 1989 or '90.

DRAWI: And you were in late high school, beginning of college?

SC: Beginning of college. Oh, I'm sorry, I'm going out of order. Let's go back a few years to high school. I went to a trade school for part of the day. The trade school was designed for people who would go directly into the workforce. I ended up doing designs for the Thrifty Nickel-type, throwaway newspapers

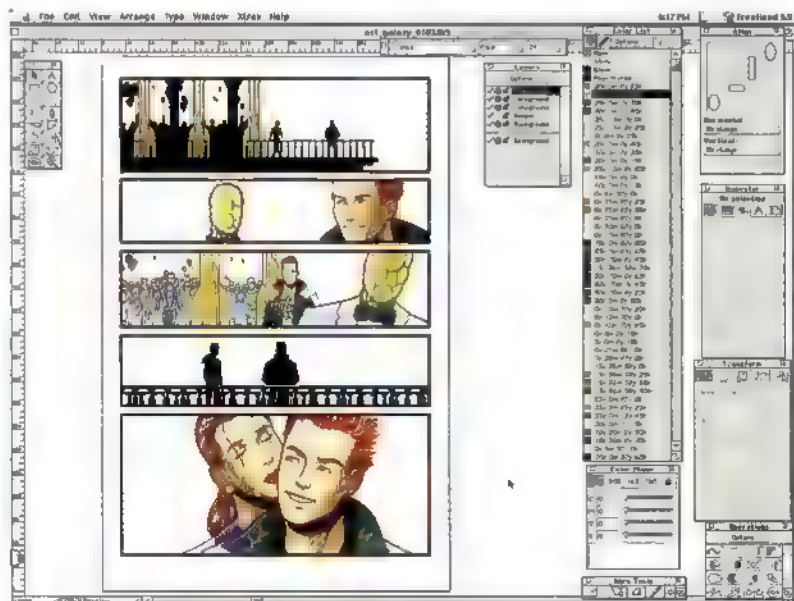
DRAWI: So you had a graphic artists class?

SC: For half a school day, we'd study commercial art. We had some great teachers, doing magazine designs and magazine comps.

DRAWI: And this a pre-Mac?

SC: Pre-Mac. I'd say about three months pre-Mac. One day in the middle of class, the teacher said that the class received a computer. As I was ahead of my work, he asked me open it up, figure out how it works and let him know. It was a Mac.

DRAWI: Was this an Apple 2-E?





ABOVE: The color file is opened at 400 DPI and backgrounds and special effects are added. The outer space scenes are often composites of a number of NASA images.

RIGHT: The daily comics strip uses color dialogue balloons keyed to individual characters. Argosy's balloons are white, Theremin's are Yellow, and so on. Since the AST comic strip can be added to any website, the buttons below each strip allow readers to click back to the AST website, the AST store, etc. The rectangle in the upper right is an advertising position available for sale and embedded in each strip. © 2004 STEVE CONLEY

SC: It was actually a Macintosh. It must have been a Macintosh 512K or a 256K, maybe? But it came with an audio tape. It played some *Peanuts*-type music while you went through it [laughs] And the coolest thing, it was a comic. The first thing, the movement on the screen, this little guy's walking down the street, he pauses and the word balloon pops over his head. It basically said, "Click." And it showed a little diagram of how to click and double-click and drag. It was this multimedia comic, the first thing that came out.

DRAW: So your first experience with the computer was also your first experience with comics on the computer?

SC: Digital comics. It was this scrolling environment where the character walked around. And I'm sure it was a hack because if they could have used audio, they would have, but the technology wasn't really there. At that point, I don't recall if it had a hard drive or if you were just swapping out floppy discs all the time. But that was in '86 and then I would have been about fifteen or sixteen years old. And I've been using Macs ever since, more than half my life.

DRAW: Wow. So you started out on a Mac?

SC: Right out of the gate.

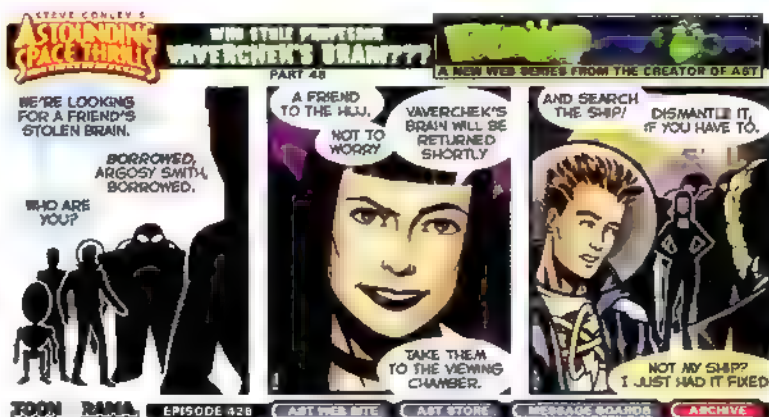
DRAW: And then later on, you learned how to use PCs?

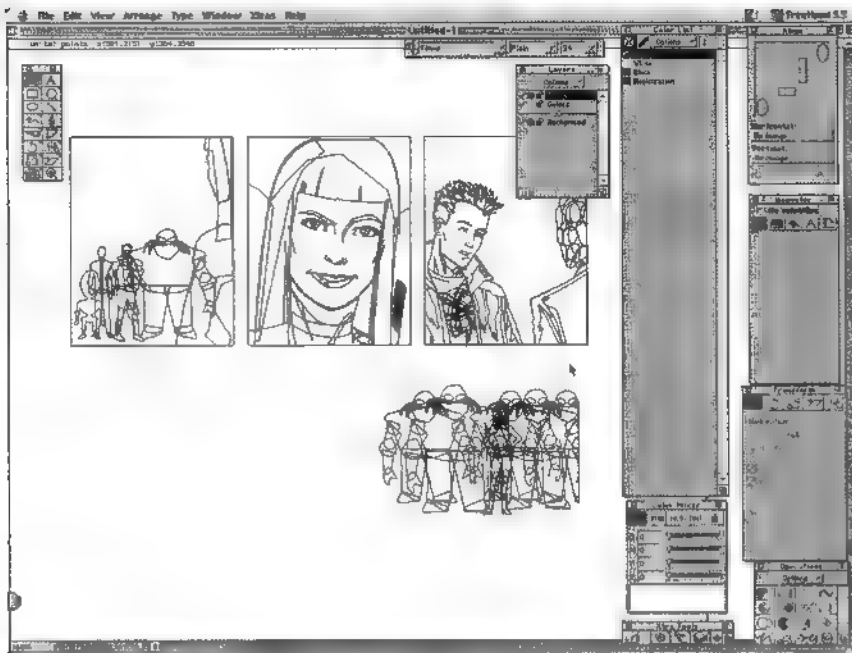
SC: Yes. I still use PCs only infrequently.

DRAW: Did you actually try to do comics with a Mac at that point?

SC: Yep, the first thing I tried to do was I taped a pencil to a mouse and tried to go over my own drawings, almost like you would on an Art-O-Graph.

DRAW: Or a Sketch-O-Graph, one of those things where you have a pencil on one end and there's a thing on the other end and you trace?





SC: Ah, it was on the other end. You sort of trace it and it makes a duplicate image elsewhere. I tried to do it on a mouse not realizing the the position of the cursor is relative to the mouse. But I had done a comic the following year on it, about a—again, it might have been about Argosy, this sort-of platypus character. I don't have that anywhere any more.

DRAW: Nothing to come back to haunt your past?

SC: No, but I would love to see it, though. It was probably incredibly crude and charming. Yeah, I did my first comics back then, a few small comics, all on the computer, all with a mouse. It was all bitmap drawings, probably, all in Mac Paint



DRAW: So you were now continuing, with each comic you did with the computer, to experiment with and push the limits of what you could do with the technology of the time?

SC: Whenever I could. In college I used the computer for some effects. But for the most part I wanted to use all the traditional art tools. I used duo shade board and Craftint paper and Crowquill board. You could use a grease pencil to add textures. It wasn't until I got out of college and was working for a news service in Washington, D.C. that I started to get back into comics again and started thinking about how I could use a computer to ink. So I would draw my comics traditionally, scan the pencils and then ink them on the computer itself, using a mouse.

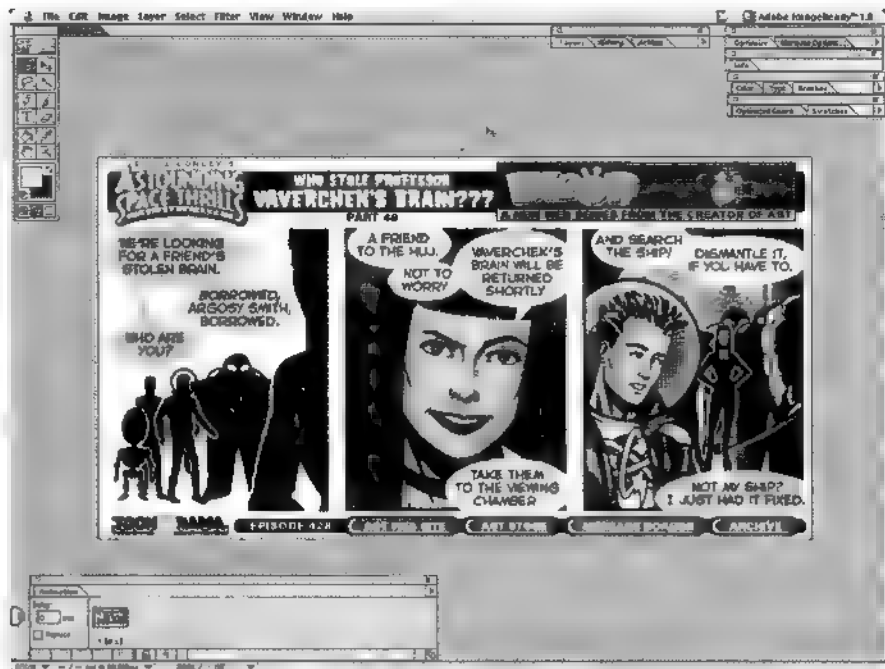
DRAW: Which must have been very time intensive because inking with a mouse, you're using the lasso tool to go around and trap stuff?

The images above show the linework for the same comic strip. "The top image shows the 'keyline' mode where you can see the individual polygons I have to create to give the appearance of thick-and-thin linework. One page in the *Galaxy-Sized Astounding Space Thrills* required more than a million individual mouse clicks. That particular page took more than two weeks to complete." The crowd is drawn in full below the strip to be composited in Photoshop.

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The slightly enlarged view of the same comic strip in Photoshop shows the color added. Note the number of layers needed for each color shape. Behind the figures you can see the use of 3-D environments created in Bryce.

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SC: Partly, except I didn't do this in the Bitmap program, not Photoshop, but in an vector program, FreeHand. It's good in that it produces very sharp, crisp lines. It's resolution-independent so you can scale elements, you can play with size and position. And the best thing about it was it had multiple "Undo"s so where I would be fairly cowardly with ink, I would be a lot more bold with what I would try because I knew I could just select it to delete it

DRAW: That must have been one of the first programs to have a multiple Undo

SC: It was and that was its strength over the competing software Adobe Illustrator. That and you could preview your work while you were working on it.

DRAW: Well, it always seems to be that when a new technology comes out—even now, you still have that whole thing between the Mac and the PC. Type displays one way on a PC, it displays another way on a Mac when you're designing web pages. Or if I want to burn a CD and I want to send it to you, and you're on a PC and I'm on a Mac, it's a headache. It's always a headache.

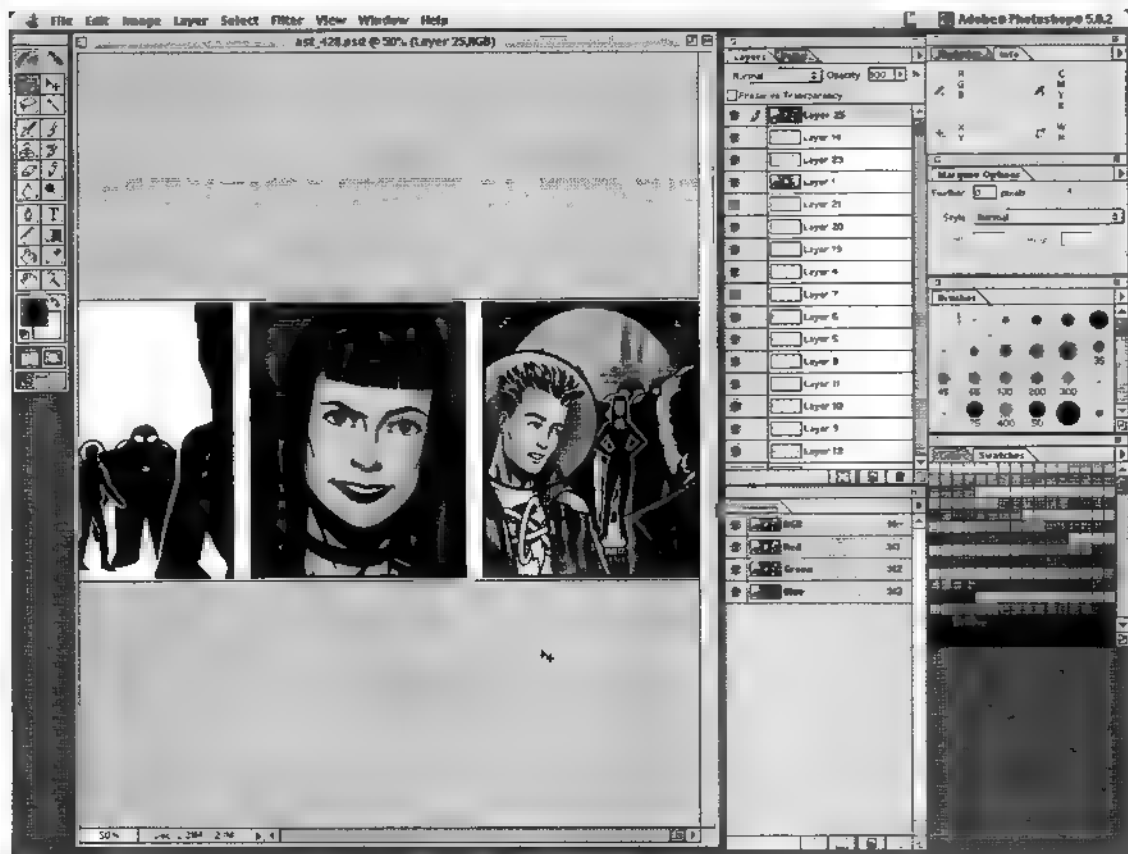
SC: It's a real mess. A lot of people like that Microsoft has taken over, in many regards, because it's simplified things a lot. The same kind of "benefit" that might come if any single country had taken over the world, then we would all be speaking the same language. *[laughs]*

DRAW: But it's very interesting to hear your perspective because you were doing, it sounds like, more computer comics than traditional comics, where for most guys it's all traditional comics. And then, like a lot of the artists I know, we're sort of grudgingly dragged into the digital world, kicking and screaming. Where now, there's jobs that I do that I could not do if I didn't have a computer. I mean, it's really entered that stage now, where ten years ago it was sort of optional. You could have a computer or not have a computer. But now, it's like if you don't have a computer, you're a...

SC: Freak! *[laughs]* Yes, I mean, many of my design clients now, they want the ability to receive the work electronically. And they like receiving it electronically because they don't have to scan it, it saves them a lot of time.

DRAW: And, also, they can say, "Well, gee, we can change it here." You can go into Photoshop and bring, bring, bring, Paintbrush, whatever, Bucket. I can change it from red to green to blue or whatever. They can noodle with it again if they decide to on that end.

SC: There used to be this feeling that you slaved over this art board and you knew at any moment, one drop of ink in the wrong place would ruin it. And so the board, after working on it for a few hours, becomes really valuable and really precious to the person who's working on it because they don't want to screw it up. With us, working digitally, it's not done until we say it's done. And if we change our mind a week later, we can go back, we can erase it a million times, we can click and delete as many times as we want, we can save different versions along the way and try different solutions.



ABOVE: This shows all the layers and tool windows Conley works with. © 2004 STEVE CONLEY

DRAW: Now, do you find that affects your relationship to the original? Traditionally, if you're drawing a comic, when you're done with the page, you've created this piece of art. You sort of feel there's a whole tactile, "I crafted this thing out of nothingness," where on the computer, it's not a tactile sense of creating something. You're not fighting with the pen or the brush. I mean you might be fighting with the stylus or tweaking some controls but do you find that affects your relationship to your artwork, to the original?

SC: It's been years since I've produced a piece of original art by "comic art" standards. The work I have produced has been, by and large, sketches. All my pages start as fairly tight sketches. I scan those sketches in and redraw the pages, so for me, the original art has never really had much value. Not in that sense, not in the gallery sense

DRAW: So it's not like you're going to have five hundred original *Astounding Space Thrills* strips that you're going to take into the Cartoon Art Museum and have a show. It's all, like,

virtual art.

SC: Right. I mean, it does exist. It's just that it doesn't exist in a way that people are used to it existing. I've talked about this a lot and I think it's a real opportunity for someone who produces their online comics traditionally—with ink on paper. If the cartoonist adds a link which says, "Buy this original art," they'd have another revenue stream. It seems like such a great opportunity

WEB COMICS

DRAW: I guess this leads us into talking about you producing the strip. You started out designing websites for people like *USA Today* and places like that, right? And then you started iComics before you started Comicon, right?



ABOVE: Sketches for background characters done in ballpoint pen that Conley will digitally ink, then take into Photoshop and color.

SC: I put together SteveConley.com in 1995 which was kind of a catch-all for any kind of weird experiments I had at any given time. It was before I was freelancing. I was still working for *USA Today* and I wanted to create a place where I could put these different, weird experiments. One of them was Super-marketing, which was a collection of old comic book ads. Another was Kaleidescape which was a collection of background textures that I created just as freebies for people. I wanted to play around with some page designs and frame layouts because I thought Frames was a great technology but it was being maligned because it was being used so badly. So many sites had used Frames so badly that everybody said, "Oh, you can't use Frames. Frames are terrible." But I knew there had to be a good way to use it and that's what Kaleidescape turned into, this cool way of using Frames and background textures, kind of an online catalog. And then I wanted to do a comic site and I looked for a good domain name and iComics was there. Part of what I wanted to do was help promote comics, the comics that I liked, and try to support the industry until the time that I was able to produce my own comics again.

While I was working for Gannett News Service, I started my first comic book called *Avant Guard*. It was terrible but educational. It was black-&-white super-heroes and through the experience, a lot of things came out of it. One of them was at the same time as Dave Sim's *Spirits of Independents* Tour, so I got to go there and got to meet Dave Sim and meet a lot of the cartoonists like Rick Veitch.

DRAWI: And when was this? Where was this?

SC: '94 and there were a number of them, all over the US. The first one was in Austin, Texas. I went to three or four of the Spirit stops. I wanted to use this as an opportunity to promote my book and meet other cartoonists and learn as much as I could from them, on how they were working and what they were doing. So although the book *Avant Guard* wasn't ready for prime time, the experience was terrific. One of things I learned from that was a black-&-white super-hero book is a really, really bad idea. I met a lot of cartoonists including Rick Veitch and Dave Sim. And apart from meeting other creators, I also met a lot of readers. From them, I found out that black-&-white and

super-heroes are a really bad mix. The crowd that accepts black-&-white can't really get past the spandex and the spandex crowd really wants their books in color so they kind of cancel each other out. *Avant Guard* came out in what I've heard called the first real month of decline of comics in '94 and that was the same month as *Spawn/Batman*.

DRAWI: So you can track that, that was the first month of actual—?

SC: Of the collapse.

DRAWI: That's when the poo poo hit the fan?

SC: [laughs] Things began imploding pretty rapidly

DRAWI: Oh yeah. Especially at that time, it seemed like every month it was just a freefall, basically.

SC: And that's not to say *Avant Guard* wouldn't have tanked if the market were healthier. I came out of that Spirit of Independents wanting to do something very serious, something very personal and it just sort of occurred to me that I was twenty-five years old and I'm really not cut out yet to tell anything really personal. I really don't want to do anything too serious. I want to have fun. I want to enjoy myself.

DRAWI: You didn't feel you wanted to tell some autobiographical tale?

SC: Basically, I just decided to have as much fun as possible instead of trying to be serious, instead of trying to create this epic or this *Citizen Kane*. I wanted to create the exact opposite, which was *Astounding Space Thrills*. It's fun. That's not to say a lot of my ideas don't get into the pages. It's just that they're not dreadful. It's not to say that *Citizen Kane* was dreadful but it's just dark and I don't want that kind of darkness in my work. If I create something, I want it to be beautiful and fun and hopeful and exciting and enjoyable and *Astounding Space Thrills* is the just the opposite of all that darkness.

I didn't realize until much later that if you're not having fun, you're not taking life seriously

DRAWI: Did you play around with the concept for a while before you finally settled on *Astounding Space Thrills*?

SC: I played around a lot. A couple things actually shaped it, to twist it into shape. Early on, Argosy Smith looked a lot like Argon Zark and then I saw Argon Zark online which is a comic strip by Charlie Parker

DRAWI: Yeah, sort of the grandfather of all web strips. Charlie is a good friend of mine and I remember when he got his computer and he started messing around with it. He then got involved with the Internet and the next thing you know, he starts doing this online comic.

SC: And the character Argosy might have a vest and it was actually going to have a pattern that would change from panel to panel. And then goofy hair, kind of the same wild hair as that. Because of the similarities, I changed his look entirely. The other change was Argosy's name. He was originally named Crash Roswell until I saw the cover of *Diamond Previews* that had Bill Morrison's *Roswell* on it.

DRAW! When you were developing the style, were you trying to come up with a streamlined science-fiction style or did you find that working with the computer affected your technique? That is to say that if you're working with a pen and a brush, it's a lot easier to start cross-hatching or stippling or feathering, where if you work on the computer you don't tend to do that. It always seems to be smoother or cleaner

SC: Well, the first thing I wanted to do with *Avant Guard* was I tried to make it look as unlike a computer as possible. So people came up to me and asked me what I inked it with, brush or pen? They couldn't tell that it was computer. It wasn't readily apparent that I used a computer and I try to do that with my work today

DRAW! So it doesn't look all rasterized

SC: Just so it doesn't get in the way. The idea is that if the reader notices, if the reader is thinking about how it was done, they're not thinking about the story. So I try to make the tools as transparent as possible. I tried to create this thick-and-thin art approach using a mouse. With *Avant Guard*, I was really trying to give the work the look of Steranko and Wally Wood: Extreme lighting, over-muscled characters, extreme positions, hellenistic, very twisted, torn. They took so much time that on the next project, I wanted to simplify for the sake of being able to get it out on time, for the sake of being able to have more life and spend some more time on the story. *Avant Guard's* extensive use of gray tones and intense modeling on figures gave way to *Astounding Space Thrill's* simple figures and one shade of gray.

DRAW! And where did it appear first?

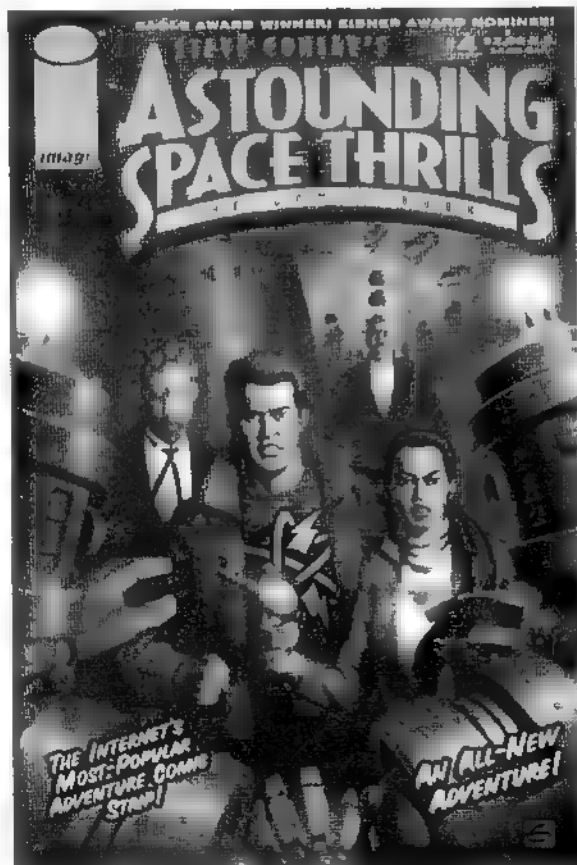
SC: That sort of came on the heels of launching Comicon.com. After launching *USA Today*, and in my own time working on iComics and trying to build up a small list of freelance projects, I launched Conley Interactive which was my own freelance business. I produced web design work for Time-Warner and for GTE and a few other associations in Washington, D.C. At about that time, I got a phone call from Rick Veitch, who had contacted me via Michael Cohen. Rick Veitch wanted to put together a website showcasing his own work, and then the pattern we would use for his site would then become the pattern for creating the websites for other cartoonists. In discussing the web with him, I had just come back from a conference in Greece where I was actually giving a lecture at a convention of convention planners. [laughs] It was a convention of people who actually talked about how to put conventions on and I was telling them how you could use the Web to create digital, virtual equivalents of their real-world

conventions. The next thing you know, I'm talking to Rick and the metaphors we're using are all convention-related. The next thing you know, we've created Comicon.com. I built the first few booths and we were signing people up and Comicon launched in '98

At the same time, I was self-publishing. Then in March of '99, I launched the *Astounding Science* daily comic strip once the launch of Comicon.com had settled down. Not that it's settled but the growth of Comicon is just incredible, specifically this year, specifically the last few months when Newsarama joined us.

DRAW! I suppose, to a certain extent, you're benefiting from the fact that so many of the other sites who are funded by the dot.bomb syndrome have all folded and got blown away

SC: Possibly. I think the more comic sites there are, the more spread out the comic audience is.



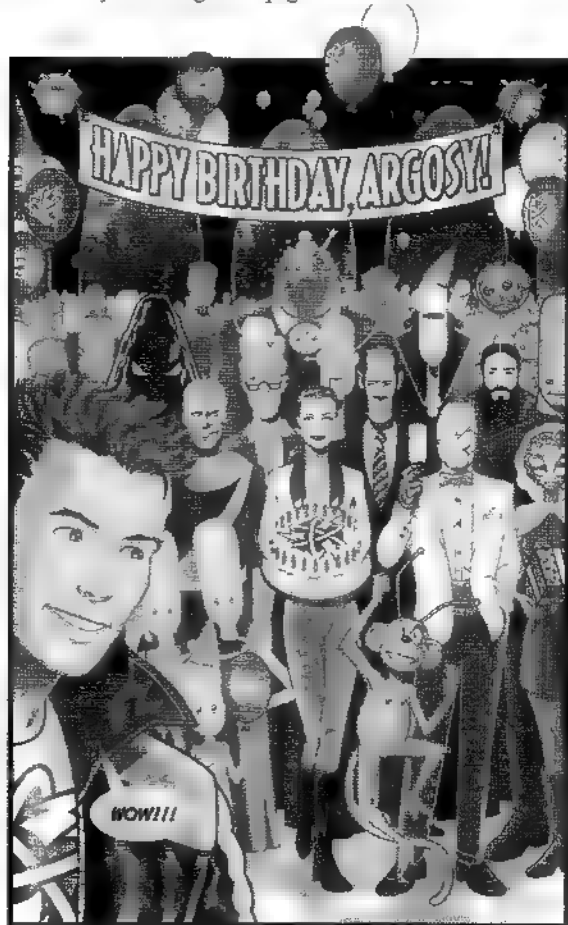
The cover of the *Astounding Space Thrills* #4 by Dave Gibbons, which Conley published through Image Comics. © 2004 STEVE CONLEY

DRAWI: So when you started doing the daily strip, that's a commitment now on your part and the demands of doing a daily strip, I imagine, whether they are digital or traditional, are probably pretty much the same. The only difference is you're not having to run your stuff through some syndicate and have some editor somewhere say, "Gee, I don't like this joke, Steve."

SC: I get to control it. The difference is I get to color it, sometimes animate it. So there were some trade-offs in the amount of work involved. But I believe in this system.

DRAWI: Right. Well, with this whole constant merging and melting down, with these big congloms buying and gobbling up another place, that's just less choice for you as the consumer, it's less choice for you as an artist. If you run afoul of one of the arms of the corporation and they're trying to rip you off and you're going to have to sue them, then all the other arms can, basically, ban you from working for them. It's not a good thing.

SC: Everyone who's got twelve o'clock blinking on their VCR is going to accept what they're handed. They're not going to figure out that they can change their page.



DRAWI: It'll be like TV

SC: Exactly. It's like TV but they're being handed a TV Guide and you're not included in it. Your channel's out there but you're going to have to expect people to type in some long code. That's the only way they're going to get to you. You have to hope that people are going to know who you are and what your property is. That's really what I'm working for. I'm working to find a way to make it so that everyone knows *Astounding Space Stories* so if it does collapse further, that I'll still be able to make a living and still be able to...

DRAWI: Ply your trade as a cartoonist?

SC: And live well

DRAWI: My hat's off to you. It seems to me that the best thing about the Web is that as an artist, it takes you a couple of weeks, you can learn the basics to put up your own artwork and start getting your stuff seen. You don't have to rely upon the traditional media outlets to express yourself to a mass audience. That's not to say that you're going to make a lot of money or you're suddenly going to become rich overnight. But you don't have to sell a show to ABC or Walt Disney or give your character or your ideas away in order to broadcast them to a mass audience. I still think that is the best thing about the Internet as an artist. And it's immediate. You can connect with people all over the world where in print, still, you're limited to the retailers and whether the retailers order your magazine through the distributor and how far that distributor can distribute your material.

SC: Absolutely.

DRAWI: It's interesting to see that you're doing both things. You're doing the Internet stuff and then you're also exploring the traditional print medium. But what did you find, good and bad, about doing both?

SC: Well, about the Internet, I found nothing bad. I mean, I can see no negatives working online.

DRAWI: There's no downside to you working online?

CONLEY: This is page 2 of the *Galaxy-Sized Astounding Space Thrills*. This book marks a different approach for me in the art of the series. In addition to the adoption of a single-weight line, I am using the computer to color the line itself. This gives and almost "animated" look to the art. All linework and color of the figures is done in Macromedia FreeHand. Those figures are imported into Photoshop for manipulating and color-correcting/adjusting. The backgrounds are composited in Photoshop as well. © 2004 STEVE CONLEY

SC: I don't see any downside to it. There are a couple of potentially bad future scenarios but I don't focus on these things. I just realize that they're out there and so I try to make my stuff as powerful as I can to get past it so if these walls do start to collapse, I have enough momentum to get out of here, so I could move into another medium. I've never been wed to any one medium. I figure a good story is a good story, whether it's a movie or a TV series or a comic book or prose or whatnot. I'm not particular. So the bad situation would be that Microsoft and AOL own the only two browsers there are and you have to modify your work to suit their browsers, which is essentially what we've got now. You have to make it look good on both of those browsers and both browsers have peculiarities which make it more difficult. We don't see any of the explosive growth in browser technology that was going on in '97, '98. Things have slowed down considerably. A bad situation would be something like Flash becoming so dominant that Flash technology and offerings become a barrier to entry into cartooning. Right now, look at how the price on everything drops. The cost of Photoshop has gone down as time goes on. The cost on all these different programs go down as competition enters and Flash has no competition. You'll notice consistently, the cost of Flash has gone up. The first version of Flash was, what, ninety nine bucks?

DRAW! Yeah, it was pretty cheap.

SC: Now it's \$350. And as long as a company own a market, that will be the trend. I don't fault them for that's how they operate. But knowing that they operate that way, it makes it so that when I produce my cartoons online, I make sure they're available in multiple formats. I don't want to make sure that all my readers have—if my readers don't like Flash for any reason, they can use QuickTime. If they don't like QuickTime, they can use Real. If they don't want to use a PC at all, or if they want to view this stuff on their video monitor, I'm going to make it available on DVD. If they don't want it there, I have it in G Movie and Active Sky formats for their

Palm handhelds. So the basic principle is that of all the toncasting distributions, that the only reason that people shouldn't read, watch or enjoy your work is that they don't like it.

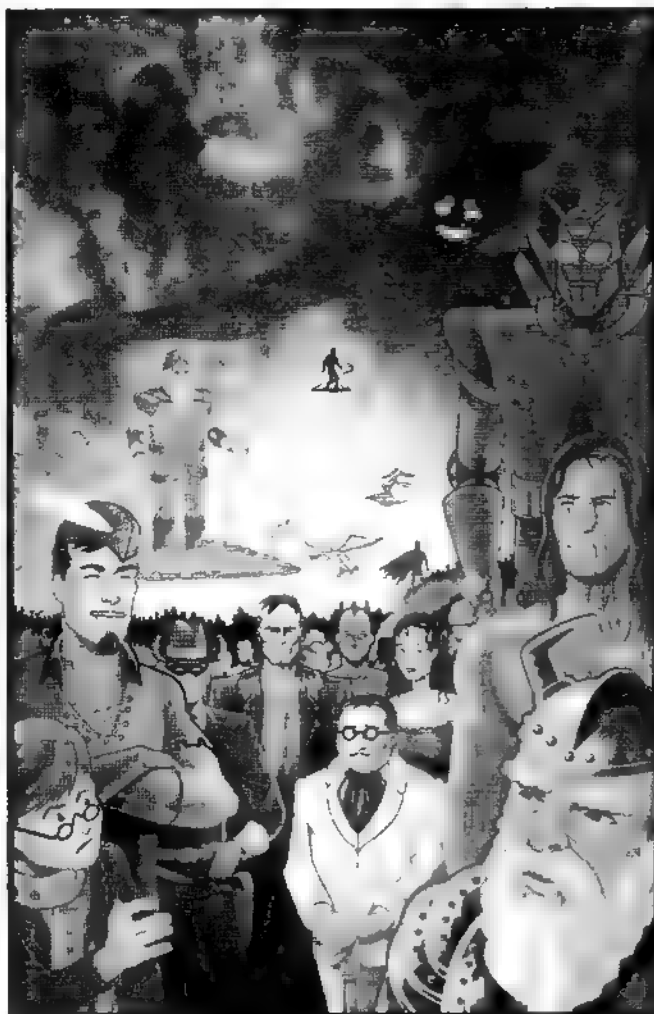
DRAW! So you don't view technology as a hindrance between you and your audience? You're not going to let that be a barrier

SC: I don't want it to be a barrier. I recognize that it's there but I want to do everything I can to make it as easy as possible. I may have more readers or almost as many readers reading *Astounding Space Thrills* as there are in the comic book direct market.

DRAW! Wow, that's a huge accomplishment to think that you could have as many or more readers than *X-Men*

CONLEY: This is page 8 of the *Galaxy-Sized Astounding Space Thrills* comic book from Image Comics. I've also done more modeling of the figures than in previous issues of *AST*. All linework and color of the figures is done in Macromedia FreeHand. Those figures are imported into Photoshop for manipulating and color-correcting/adjusting. The backgrounds are composited in Photoshop as well.

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SC: According to my website, according to statistics, 270,000 readers have hit so far this month. 270,000 visitors so that could be a person who read one page or read them all. I don't have statistics beyond that. But that seems to top most comic figures

DRAW: Well, that more than doubles the top comic's readers. I think the top books are selling a hundred ten, a hundred twenty thousand?

SC: Yeah, and that does not translate at all into the comic shops, that 270,000 people.

DRAW: Or sales. Now, conversely, when you were putting out *AST* through Image—

SC: And I still am

DRAW: And you still have one more issue?

SC: Two more. And then probably a trade. I'll probably continue the series too, but just infrequently... irregularly I mean, it's infrequent already. But I don't think I'll be going back to a bimonthly schedule until I get a few other things to shake out

THE VIRTUAL DRAWING BOARD

SC: The daily strip starts off on regular typing paper, regular Xerox paper, 8½" x 11" sheets, usually in ball point Pentel looks like Paper-Mate Dynagrip pens, clickable. [laughs] Blue ink, usually in a coffee shop or diner, far away from telephone lines or any interruptions. I mean, the phone probably has rung here about twenty times. In both our studios, the phone's rang about twenty times, total.

DRAW: Right.

SC: But away from all that stuff, I draw the comic strip roughly to size but knowing full well that I've got the ability to have the computer move the characters around. I scan that image in and bring that into a program I use for inking which is FreeHand I use FreeHand, which is a Macromedia product. I use a very old version of it because I don't like any of the alleged improvements that they've made. I find that with software, every time a new processor comes out, the software writers tend to try to get away with everything that they can and they go, "Come on, most processors are not going to handle this." They don't try to streamline it. I'm using a version of FreeHand that I've had for about six years. Well, not six. Maybe four years. So I bring the scan in and I scan it grayscale so I usually turn it blue, like light blue pencil lines, lock that on a separate layer and then using a mouse, I ink over that work by redrawing the artwork.

DRAW: You don't use a Wacom tablet?

SC: Nope, never liked them. Never found one I like yet.

DRAW: That's interesting because most guys are using the tablets now

SC: I think that when the tablet and the screen are integrated, I'll like them a lot better. I find on my Handspring Visor which most Palms are, basically the tablet and the touchscreen, all in one—I enjoy sketching on that. I think it's more creative. But for purposes of inking, I like the control of the mouse. That's just my personal preference and I may change that when I get something else I happen to like. Once the inking is done, I delete the scan and export it as an EPS file. I then open up that EPS file in Photoshop and color the piece. I tend to use Magic Wand tools whenever possible and select areas, get the shapes closed and then I use Polygon Tool and fill it with color and bobble it as much as I can. I tend to work at four times the resolution you see on a computer screen with two thoughts in mind. One is that I may reprint these stories later I might reprint the comics. I'd like to, at some point, reprint those in paper form because I love comics. At the point where I export the EPS, that's where the work I do for online and the work I do for print kind of diverge. Both processes start the same but I'm right now thinking this for online comics for a portion of it. I color it in Photoshop and when the coloring is done, I export that to ImageReady and I letter it in ImageReady because I like the text tools there. In ImageReady, I occasionally have some animation. It's exported as a GIF and that's it. In terms of the comic book itself, all the coloring is also done in FreeHand. I actually color all the figures using FreeHand and occasionally bring in the occasional TIFF for texture if it's a space background.

DRAW: I notice that you had some really nice nebulae and stuff like that in the backgrounds sometimes.

SC: And some 3-D models, too.

DRAW: Do you do your 3-D models on a Flash vector program plug-in or something?

SC: I'm using an old version of software called Metatools Infini-D. Metatools has been purchased by somebody else. I think the program's been discontinued but I just like it. I've been using it a few years.

Photoshop's such a brilliant program. It's so brilliant that there's so many ways of doing the exact same thing that it really lets you do it your own way. I can't tell you how many times I ask myself, "If I were writing these programs, would I have allowed?" I just try things because I've never read the manual, like most people, because it's so dense. It seems to have this logarithmic learning curve where you can't possibly know everything about Photoshop. There's still sections that people never use. We may do comics with it but we've never used Labcolor. My wife is a digital imager and she spends half her day in there but she's never used some of the filters I use daily. But when you click on a layer and you drag it, holding the Option key, it actually clones that layer. And you think, "Of course it does. It's the most obvious thing in the world."

But these programmers and designers are so brilliant at Photoshop that everything is done for you. I think that you can never learn, you can never totally master the version of Photoshop before they release a new one.

DRAWI: So after it's all done up—you say you're working at four times the resolution?

SC: Yeah.

DRAWI: So you're working at what dpi then?

SC: It's down-sampled to 72 dpi

DRAWI: And the original sample is done at?

SC: Probably 270.

DRAWI: 300 dpi is usual resolution for print use.

SC: It's slightly less than that. I might shrink it when I finally put it in print to tighten it up.

DRAWI: Then you put it up on your server and it's automatically sent out to everyone?

SC: Well, the way it works is Tooncasting is a CGI script that runs in my server. The beautiful thing about doing this I've never had to rewrite the CGI script from the day it launched in 1999. The script determines the file name of what strip is being delivered. It writes down who's requesting that strip, the page that's asking for that strip and it decides whether to deliver a GIF or JPEG. Because the thought I had was, what if I'm doing this thing for ten years and *Astounding Space Thrills* is on a million different webpages and a new format comes out? Let's say PNG becomes the new standard and everybody's got the ability to read PNGs or an animated version of PNG. The idea is, I didn't want to get stuck with a specific technology. Let's say I had a graphic on my site called "today.GIF" and that was just the daily strip. I could still look at the logs to see who's calling it up, who their referrers were, I could still modify that GIF but I'd be stuck with a GIF. The cool thing about pointing to a CGI which holds that GIF, it allows me all sort of other functions.

DRAWI: And the CGI script converts?

SC: It automatically grabs the right one based on the calendar. I just name one of the strips "AST daily underscore 072601.GIF" and it knows on the 26th, that's the strip you show. And I put up one called "072701" and it knows on the 27th, that's the graphic you show.

DRAWI: I think it's such a great idea to be able to self-syndicate your own strip. You had a sponsor for the strip after a while, right?

SC: Sponsored for quite some time and they've been very supportive. I haven't been pursuing additional sponsorship right

now, just because I've been so caught up on "BLOOPY" and Comicon.com's growth but I think having all these three things dovetail together at the same time is going to make a terrific year

DRAWI: That's great. The comic for Image is basically done exactly the same way. You're just doing everything in CMYK, I take it?

SC: Yep, and without any kind of softness of brush. There's no real feathering. Everything in *AST* the comic book is flat color.

TOONARAMA

DRAWI: I guess we should touch on Toonarama because that fits into the whole. Yet another piece of the Steve Conley universe.

SC: Well, the Comicon.com Universe. Rick Veitch, as far as Comicon.com goes, it's an equal partnership.

DRAWI: Rick is a partner with you in Toonarama?

SC: Yes.


DRAWI: And how many strips are there now?

SC: Probably 15. I would say that Toonarama is essentially in an extended alpha or beta stage of development. Toonarama would have been Rick's and my focus if not for Comicon.com's incredible recent growth and expansion to include Newsarama.

DRAWI: Now, what is the criteria for submitting a strip to Toonarama?

SC: It will change over time because Rick and I see Toonarama growing into being something different than what it is today. Right now, what it is, if you have a Tooncast strip and you'd like it to be included on the site, welcome aboard. Right now, Toonarama is a single place where you can find all the strips that you can add to your own webpage.

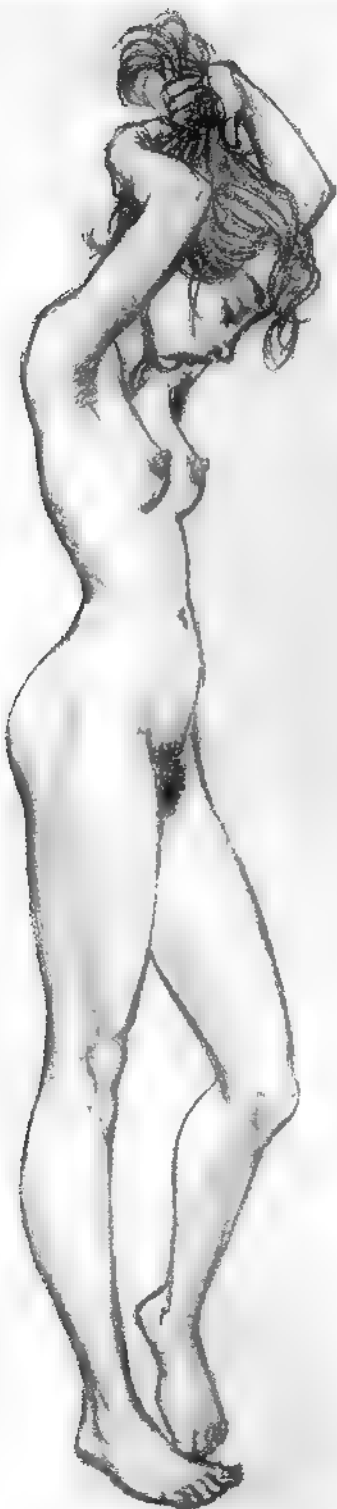
DRAWI: So how do you envision it in the future? Do you see online publishing being in any way better or more viable than the publishing in today's current direct market?

SC: Infinitely more. Infinitely better. No comparison. There's just no way to compare the two. I mean, to publish in the direct market, the cost of publishing one comic in the direct market will buy you a fantastic computer that will allow you to work for years on the Internet. And you have to look at the two mediums. One of them has a market which is consistently collapsing for the past ten years and one which is exploding. Which one would a sane person become involved with? If you put the money that you would have spent on publishing a comic book into buying a computer, it's a much better investment. 

How to Draw Figures that Feel and Think

"We must show by the action of the body the attitude of the mind."

—Leonardo da Vinci



Any visual artist serious about using the human form to represent or suggest a living personality will find Leonardo's thought constantly on his mind. Two-dimensional static images rely entirely on pose and facial expression to convey inner consciousness.

Rhythm was our subject last time (see *DRAW! #1*)—the large overall rhythm running through the entire body, and the internal rhythms of each part. The key to achieving a sense of natural movement in a figure drawing is an understanding of these rhythms—they enable an artist to clearly convey "the action of the body."

Expressing "the attitude of the mind" through rhythm of pose and gesture is a deep and subtle process acquired through constant attentive observation of people. Capturing a human mood is the goal. Although aesthetic interpretations of the human figure are varied and endless—as pure form or shape, as still life, as architecture, as an abstract symbol—this article concentrates on rendering the human body as a vehicle of consciousness. This doesn't limit an artist to representational realism, as we shall see. The most extreme designs of effective character cartooning rely on the same principles.

This issue we'll address various means of revealing a particular personality or attitude in a drawing.

Aliveness—the quality of being alive made visible in the external physical signs of a mind noticing, feeling, reacting and thinking. If you conceive of a figure drawing as posed anatomy, the mysterious essence of conscious animation is unlikely to bloom and elevate your work. Always draw a person—not a body.

Observing the gesture and attitude of every person you see is the only means of learning how to do this. Carry a sketchbook and make quick doodles noting the myriad body postures of the people all around you. A perceived mood suggested by someone's body language is your cue. Look closely and notice the exact positions of each body part—see the rhythms and shapes that seem to be telling you the person is bored, frustrated, annoyed, tired, exuberant, shy, boisterous. Fill many sketchbooks with these visual notes to yourself—don't be concerned with making complete or attractive drawings—you are training your eye and mind to see and record the telling information that describes an attitude or emotion.

Along with this fieldwork, invent figures that express an inner state of mind. Think about people you know—each individual has a temperament that guides his or her physical expression of emotion. Use your experiences of them to create imaginary personality types that can be described in a word. Taciturn, vivacious, withdrawn, jolly, gloomy, quiet, raucous, timid, brash, sensitive, boorish, intuitive, obtuse, aggressive, obliging, etc. Imagine them angry, surprised, disappointed, delighted, frustrated, amused—then try to capture some of their character traits or emotions in simple gesture sketches like these:

Worried



Distracted



Confident



Tired



Defiant

Curious



Angry



Frightened



This aspect of visualizing figures requires you to develop acting skills. You must feel the emotions in your own mind and body, then project yourself into the character you are drawing. Become that person while you are making the drawing—get “inside” them.

In my view this is the most rewarding pleasure of drawing people, because the subtlety and variety of human emotion is endless. Exploring an infinite range of body types and facial features experiencing the breadth of the human condition is an inexhaustible, intensely fascinating adventure. Delving into cartooning or fantasy images escalates the fun into a gaudy, carnival excitement—any flight of fancy that creates a convincing personality is its own delicious reward—reality poses no limits.

I’ve fashioned the rest of the article as a sort of annotated “talking sketchbook” of expressive figures. Mostly human, mostly female, but all united by the presence of a mind animating the body. You’ll find a wide range of styles—but they all share the indispensable quality—the illusion of life.

Note the changes in posture and expression that reveal the person's shifting thoughts throughout these sequential "snapshots."

The artist is completely focused on her drawing.



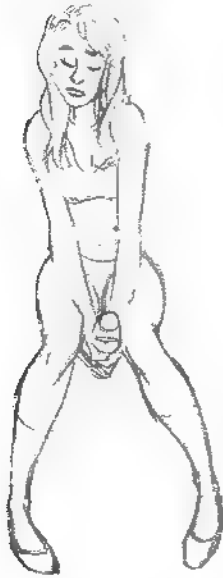
She pauses to judge it...



...then returns to work on a troublesome spot.



This young woman
is feeling blue.



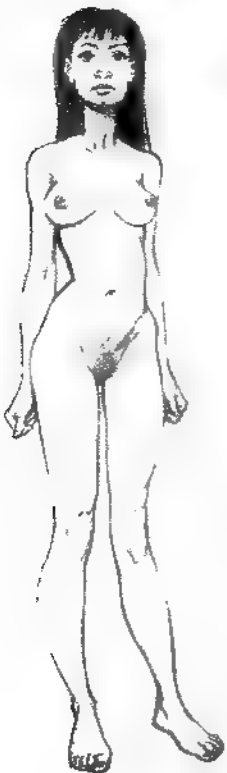
Her mind shifts to contemplating
the reason why



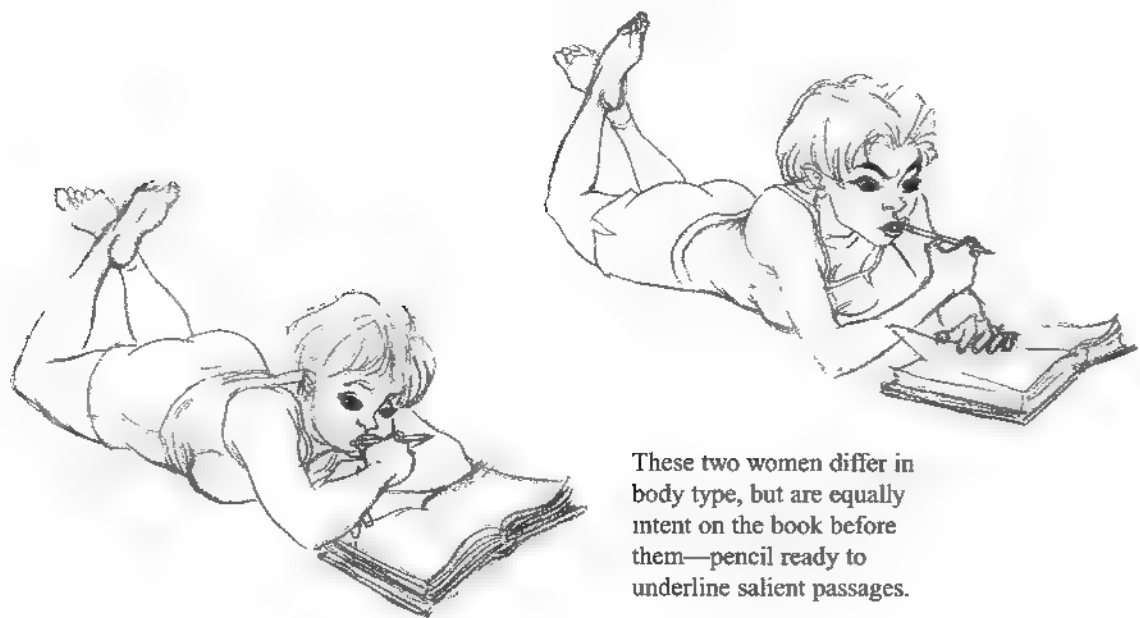
Now she wonders if there is any-
thing she can do about it.



Here attention to subtle, untypical details of stance, proportion and anatomy make each woman a distinct individual



In this sheet of sketches searching to define a character, note how subtle changes in proportion and gesture change the personality.



These two women differ in body type, but are equally intent on the book before them—pencil ready to underline salient passages.

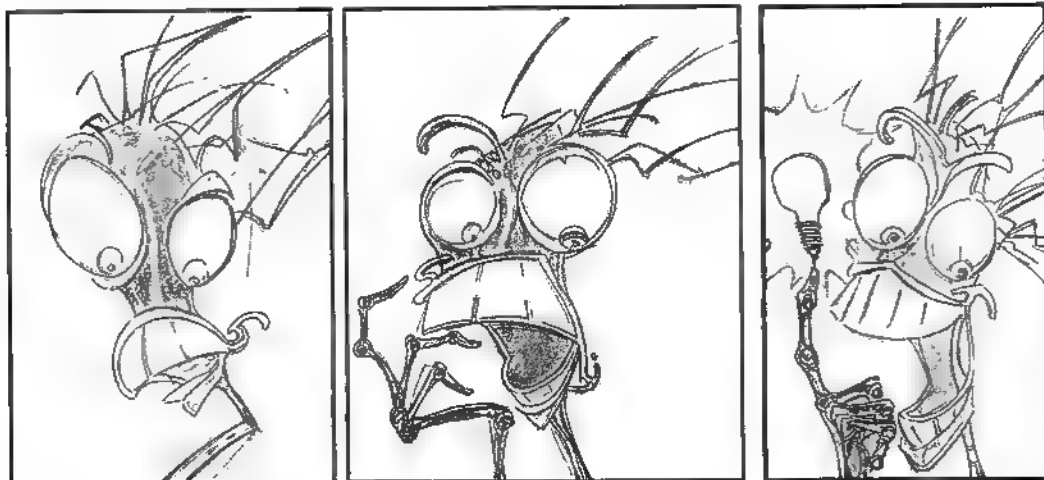


These drawings portray a kind of acting common in pictures of attractive women—a display for an audience. Here the character is fully aware of a viewer—she’s performing, even if turned away or posing demurely. The key is the term posing—no one would naturally assume these positions. It’s important to recognize that this artifice is a state of consciousness on the character’s part, too—and remember that coy overstatement is inappropriate for rendering sincere interior emotions.



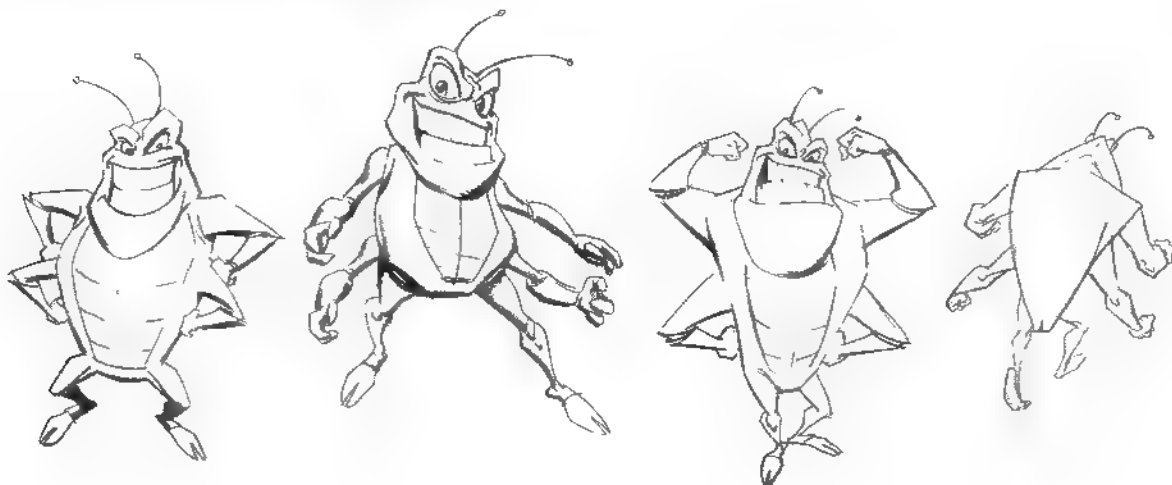
Broad styles of cartooning demand the same accurate observation of body language and empathy with the character's emotions as more realistic art. Perhaps more so, in order to compensate for the outlandish inhuman appearance of many cartoon characters. The degree of subtlety is the chief distinction between the "visual acting" of realistic and cartoon characters. Usually a broad design requires broad acting, but there are endless shades of possibilities here.

These "expression sketches" of the character Warlock convey inner thoughts and emotions by recognizable human facial contortions—without any human anatomy



WARLOCK © 2004 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC.

Wild distortion of shape and anatomy can still be imbued with recognizable emotion, as you can see in these design sketches. (Done for Electronic Arts through Lightsource Studios.)



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COLASSALUS



THE HENCHTHINGS



OLD OLLIE
THE ORACLE



This is a nightmare image of someone in agonizing fear and panic. The distortion of form intensifies this drawing into a portrait of raw emotions.



These drawings done of an unfortunate four-legged pedestrian I found along a rural road may seem out of place here—but I include them because they are so expressive of departed consciousness. The unnatural posture reveals the animal is not asleep or resting—it is obviously drugged or dead—and the curiously supplicant gesture of the forepaws seem to suggest a reluctant resignation to its fate. Perhaps I dramatized these qualities as I drew them, but that's my point—if you look for an expression of recognizable emotion you will find it in almost everything you see.



UNRECOGNIZED? KILLED ON HIGHWAY OR 5 31 99

The remaining images are random drawings I chose for their qualities of interior animation. As you look at them imagine what might be going through the character's mind. You may not be able to tell in every case, which can be just as captivating: the young woman seen at the beginning of this article is absentmindedly adjusting her hair—but her thoughts are elsewhere. I wonder what she's thinking about?

See you next time.

Bret



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Rahne's despair and Cloak & Dagger's pain and surprise are conveyed by a combination of gesture and acting—Dagger's body is contorted into a startled exclamation point



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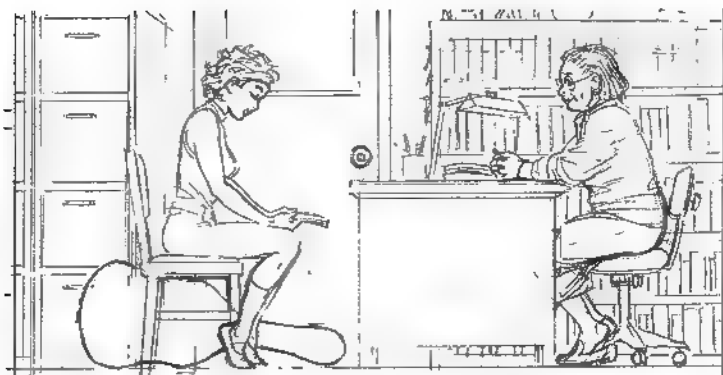
Hole is hamming it up with overwrought melodramatic gestures—completely in character for a comic-book goddess. From Blevin's run on *The New Mutants*.





The distinct personalities of the three human characters suggest a unique pose for each, though their physical action is almost identical. From Blevins run on *The New Mutants*.

THE NEW MUTANTS TM & © 2004 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC.

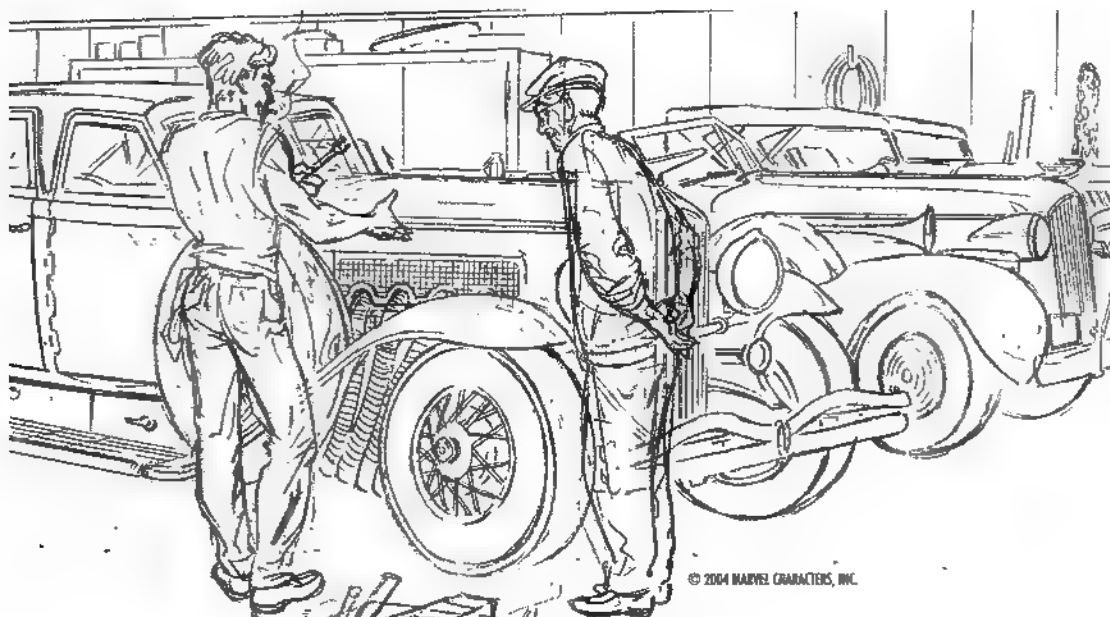


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Each of these drawings tell a miniature story—the small head of Cloak is screaming in anguish—the cowering Gosamyr is cornered—the cocky young mechanic and the bow-backed old gentleman are sharing an enthusiasm for fine automobiles—and the musical student is obviously not pleased by her grade. In this last scene the small detail of the professor's half-shod left foot is telling—including such subtlety of gesture makes a character seem real and alive.



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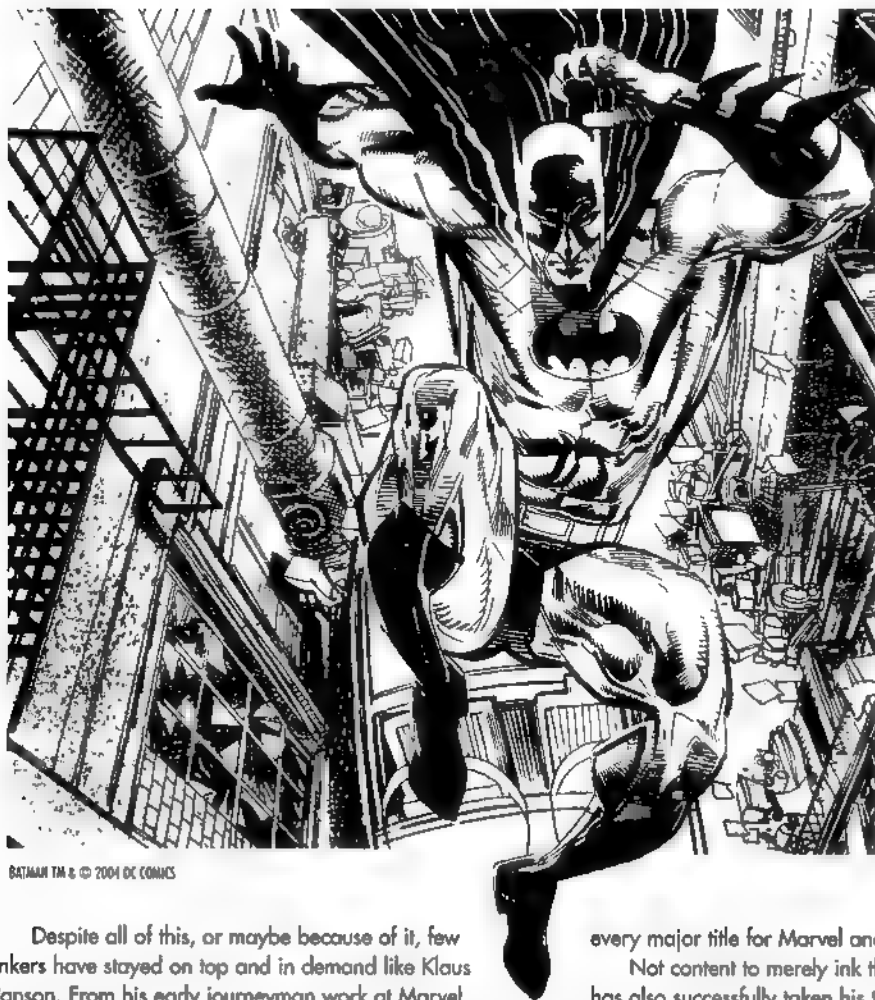
ABOVE: In the first drawing even the collapsed character's hair seems unconscious. In the second I'm sure the fellow who stood up the angry young lady can expect a searing earful.

BELOW: The two stages of the stylized figure image below reveals how important gesture-planning is—all the crucial character information is in the sketch.



ADVENTURES IN THE INK TRADE

AN INTERVIEW AND INKING DEMONSTRATION
WITH **KLAUS JANSON**



BATMAN TM & © 2004 DC COMICS

Despite all of this, or maybe because of it, few inkers have stayed on top and in demand like Klaus Janson. From his early journeyman work at Marvel and DC to his memorable collaborations with Frank Miller on *Daredevil* and again on *Dark Knight*, Janson has stayed hungry, influential, in demand, and in style. His bold, distinctive and textural inking has lavished the pencils of just about every top penciler in comics and elevated the work of many weaker pencilers. In his career he's worked on just about

every major title for Marvel and DC.

Not content to merely ink the pencils of others, Janson has also successfully taken his turn at penciling as well, applying his dynamic and noir-ish style to several works like *Batman*, a *Punisher* mini-series for Marvel, and *Batman/Spawn* to name but a few.

DRAW! magazine caught up with Janson at his NYC studio to get a "how-to" demonstration and interview from this master of pen and ink.

In the last three decades the comic book industry has gone through more than one changing of the guard, a myriad of "hot" styles, and is currently being impacted by technology, in ways that can't be predicted yet. The traditional roles of penciler and inker are shifting, changing, as are the tools and techniques they employ in their craft. While many artists struggle to deal with these changes, the comic book inker—and his or her pivotal role in the creation of the modern comic—is undergoing perhaps some of the most rapid changes due to the prevailing styles of more open art, the looming "Boogey man" of "digital inking," slicker printing, and the heavier, more dominating role of the colorist in the final look of the art.

DRAW! At what age did you decide you wanted to become a comic artist?

KLAUS JANSON: I remember the exact first time when I came across comic books. I was about 6 and walked into this Ma and Pop store two blocks from my house. Although I came in to purchase some candy, this homemade rack of comics mesmerized me. It was a sunny afternoon and the dust was floating in the light right above the rack. I bought a few and I was hooked from then on. This was the late Fifties, '58, '59. My family and I emigrated in '57 from Germany. At that point there was really nothing to buy except the Weisinger Superman line. A few years ago, when the family house was sold, I went back to clean out the attic where I stored the billions of comics I bought in my childhood. What surprised and amused me was the high amount of comics I had from that period: *Lois Lane* and *Jimmy Olsen* and *Superboy* and *Superman*. I had to adjust my self-image a bit when confronted with evidence that I wasn't as cool a kid as I remember.

I learned a lot of English from comic books. I was able to put the words together with the visual and dope out the meaning of the words. I think this left a huge impression on me and to this day my obsession is storytelling—the ability to communicate both as it applies in general and the specifics of comic books and art.

Shortly after I started buying comics, I began to cut the figures of characters out and reposition them on a blank sheet of paper to create my own stories. Actually that is a lot of fun and I recommend it as an art exercise, but thankfully the thought occurred to me that I was losing these books so I started drawing comics instead of destroying them. That was the moment when I realized that drawing was not only fun, but could be done for a reason.

I remember the exact moment that I decided to be an artist. I was raised in a fairly dysfunctional family. One of the spokes on that dysfunctional wheel was my father, whom I have never met. As a kid there was nothing I wanted more than a dad. We had a watercolor hanging up in the apartment we lived in and one day I asked about it. I was told that my father did it. I remember standing and looking at it with new meaning. If I couldn't be with my dad, I thought, perhaps this was the next best thing—to be like my dad. It was precisely that moment that I committed to being an artist.

DRAW! Now I understand you worked at Continuity Studios, the studio run by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano that did advertising as well as comics. Can you tell us what your duties were there and how you came to work there?

KJ: The way I found myself at Continuity was through Dick Giordano. I had read about the tours

that DC was offering in one of their books. I took it upon myself (I think I was 17 at the time) to join one of these tours. So I dressed up (a tie, even—can you imagine!), got on a train (I was living in Connecticut) and went up to DC Comics one Friday afternoon during summer break. The receptionist told me they didn't do tours anymore. I was, of course, heartbroken. So I went into this spiel about coming all the way from Connecticut and I was wearing a tie—couldn't they give me a break? So they turned out to be extremely nice.

The receptionist called some people, and Jack Miller (the editor of "Deadman") came out and took me around. It was a very nice thing to do. That was my first exposure to "real" comics and how it was connected to a larger industry. I also met Neal Adams who was in the offices working on an Adam Strange cover for *Strange Adventures*. He was interested specifically in a certain color combination (the red of the costume against an olive green in the background) that he believed created more depth in the cover. It was cool. Then I met Dick



GREEN LANTERN AND THE ROOM, ARTWORK AND SCRIPT BY AND © 2004 DC COMICS

Giordano who recognized my name from all the letters I used to send him at Charlton Comics. As it turned out, he lived in Stratford, which bordered the town of Bridgeport, where I lived. Through some effort on my part and some very funny coincidences, we carried on a friendship from that point. I was involved in producing a fanzine with my good friend David Kasakove, and we of course decided to exploit the only pro we knew and interviewed Dick for the second issue. From there I did a bit of ghosting for Dick, some backgrounds, and some work for Sal Trapani, Dick's brother-in-law. Actually, a story I never told was about my first professional ink job. Sal was inking Herb Trimpe on the *Hulk*. I might've done some background

work, but Sal called me up and said he was in a jam. Could I ink the last three pages while Sal went out of town on some business? "Sure," I said, "lemme at 'em." He gave me three pages on Friday which had to be done by Sunday night. So I did them. I think this was the first time the Wendigo was introduced. As every young artist does, I got extremely cocky and smug about how easy this was. I remember the next day meeting Dick and being so self-assured that I was being falsely modest—"At least they were printable, Mr. Giordano." Well the punchline was—they weren't! John Romita yelled at Sal and said they couldn't use these pages—and Sal wound up re-doing them. Something about the line being too fat. Needless to say it took me awhile to recover from that one. I didn't emerge from my cave till six months had passed.



DRAW: There seemed to be a whole group of you "Crusty Bunkers," a nickname for the group of young turks working there in the early- to mid-'70s, who definitely had the Adams and especially the Giordano influence in your work. Some of you guys even did backgrounds for a while. I remember that first *Spider-Man vs. Superman Treasury Edition*. Boy I poured over that comic studying all the technique in there and that *Giant-Size Howard the Duck* with the Sal Buscema story in there inked by you. Can you fill us in a bit on that, and if Giordano or Adams ever sat you guys down and specifically showed you certain techniques or explained theories?

KJ: So, as an extension to working with Dick, I occasionally found myself at Continuity. It was a great time and I did do some of the Crusty Bunkers work but probably not as much as some other guys. I remember sitting at a desk once and inking "Fahfred and Grey Mouser" over Howard Chaykin. I was noodling the backgrounds and decided (which the studio allowed) to broaden out and do some unimportant clothing elements. I was working on a knife and a belt buckle when Neal comes strolling by, glancing at what I was doing. I was so in awe of Neal and Dick that it was all I could do not to vomit, let alone do a decent inking job. My hand starts

TECHNIQUE

JANSON: One way an inker can work hand in hand with a penciler is by adding blacks. My goal here was to help make the focal point of the panel more obvious.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Pencils by Gil Kane.

ABOVE: Janson's inks of the same page, spotting blacks to help direct the reader's eye through the compositions.

Book *Thor*Issue *1*Story Page *23*Line Up Page *1*Colorist *BRUCE LIND BOY*

NORSE - A WIKING AGE DAA -



Thor has a brew with a few locals in this great page by John Remita Jr. from his run on Thor.

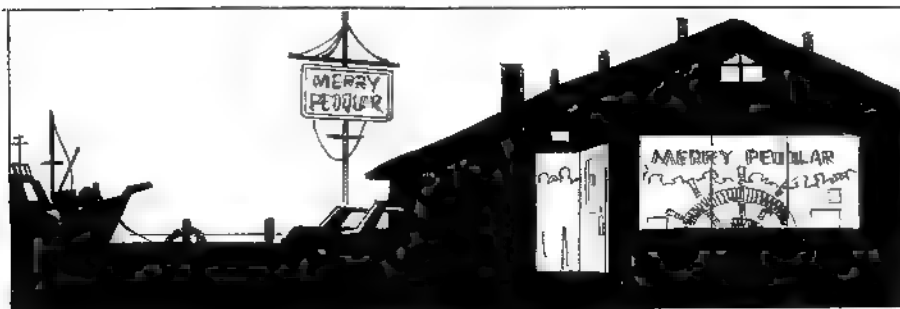


Thor
has
color

END

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD: AT 300 DPI, ALL PAGES MUST TAKE ON EACH. DO NOT OVERLAP.

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TECHNIQUE

INKING

Sometimes pages work, sometimes they don't and sometimes, like this one, they simply kick ass. This page really works for me. I think it's close to perfect. I loved the page in the pencils and went all out to do a good job. Inked all in brush (except for the straight lines) it manages to capture the variety of the characterization John put into the faces. A variety of textures (hair, Thor's beer mug, his helmet, the window, the bar), but in a simple, underrated way relying on the relationships among a great many types of line. One of my favorite pages from my favorite penciler.

to sweat and my pen starts to shake and I'm struggling to get the line right and the buckle is getting smaller and smaller and smaller. Neal says, "Ahem—why don't you stick to backgrounds for now." He strolls off and I go back into my cave for another 6 months. Demoted from belt buckles! I didn't hang around too long at Continuity. I always felt the odd man out. They had so many talented people working there and walking in that it totally intimidated me.

A lot of guys were older and just knew more and it was

tough for me, who basically knew nothing and was faking it, to feel comfortable. I never was personally taught anything by Neal. I learned a lot from studying his work and was very influenced by it (I still think that he and Roy Thomas and Tom Palmer did the best work in comics ever with their *X-Men*).

But it was Dick Giordano who actually sat me down and taught me stuff. I would do backgrounds and he would make a remark or two (the unimportance of detail for instance). I would question him while I watched him ink. He was inking an Irv

Novick job where there were three elements in the panel: A fist, the owner of the fist, and a woman (*Batman* #216, pg 1, panel 3). He explained that the fist, in the foreground needed a heavier line around it to force the reader's eye there first. I pretty much built a whole school of thought around that one conversation and one panel. It brought to my attention that art had certain rules that could be used to the advantage of the artist and his desire to communicate. Once I realized there were established directions and philosophies and that art was not just a random occurrence, I was on my way, I think, to accepting some responsibility for my work. That was a sea-change in my attitude.

It also made an enormous difference in my work. Not necessarily at that point, but certainly during my run on *Daredevil*, I felt, I was beginning to "get it." Dick played the pivotal role in my artistic development and in my becoming a pro and will always give him credit for that. If anyone cares to see the development in real literal terms, pick up the *Defenders Special* from way back where I inked Gil Kane and compare it to the last job I inked over Gil, the *Legends of the DC Universe* a year or so ago. I think it makes it clear how the priorities have shifted over time.

DRAW: I know Giordano had this very consistent thin ink line on the top (light side) of a limb or figure, etc., to a heavier line on the bottom (dark side) of the figures. But it was also kind of "designy" at the same time. Especially when he'd ink a less realistic or more stylized artist, say like the cool Sekowsky run on *Wonder Woman*. He also would put a very bold line around figures to "pop" them in front of the background. The reason I mention all of this is that as a young pro I was very influenced by Giordano's work or inking technique, Adam's and yours as well.

But I could see that Terry Austin and you and Rubinstein had a lot of the line weight theories and such in common that I could see in Giordano's inking. Later I became aware of Continuity through the fan press, etc. I even made a trip up there on my first trip with my parents to NY at the age of 14 in 1974. No one was around but it was like walking into Oz for me.



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ABOVE: A great atmospheric Spider-Man page drawn by John Romita Jr. from *The Last Years* mini-series.

NEXT PAGE: Janson dynamic inks employing a razor blade to indicate wind and rain.



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TOOLS—TECHNIQUE

RAZOR BLADE

Note the use of the razor blade technique on the background to simulate rain.

JANSON: Take a single edged blade, turn it on its end and push it away from you. It takes some practice but the idea is to get the razor to skip across the page creating a series of dots.

KJ: You mention the cool Sekowsky run on *Wonder Woman* by Dick Giordano. I'm glad to see that that particular period of *Wonder Woman* is recently getting more attention because it deserves it. Sekowsky at times could be very design-oriented and compose with shapes to create pure graphic Dick, who is an extremely versatile inker, could turn what in the pencils seemed to be a nest of disorganized lines into a coherent series of dots and dashes in the inks. It was like seeing Morse code on paper. He literally made the work understandable. And even though I respect the work that Tom Palmer did with Neal on *X-Men* and the *Avengers*, I think Dick was a better inker on Neal. Dick had the ability to give Neal a rigid line with a bit of backbone. It became stronger and more powerful as a result of Dick's inking. I learned a helluva lot from that guy.

DRAW: Did Giordano give you specific instructions though? Like never do this, or always do that? Or was it more a process of absorbing his techniques or philosophy? Did you ever copy his stuff as practice?

KJ: When I was doing backgrounds and ghosting for Dick, he would sit me down occasionally and show me how to approach certain problems. Most of the advice seemed to revolve around the "less is more" philosophy. I might spend 20 minutes on the reflections in a window or on a jewel with pen and he would show me how to do it in seconds with a brush. I realized

that it was also part of the approach; wherein the main effort is concentrated on what the reader focuses on and not the rest of the panel. Most inkers and pencilers start out with the "small" things like detail or anatomy. It's when the talent develops a bit that you realize it's really about composition or gesture or storytelling or the illusion of detail. So I was lucky enough to get specific instructions at times from Dick, but watching him work was just as useful as was talking to him about approaches or theories. I absolutely, certainly did

swipe from him as I did all my influences. I'm not a purist in that sense and recommend that everyone start out copying work they like.

DRAW! When was your first regular inking work? I remember seeing you inking John Buscema on "The Golem" or something, which must have been fairly early in your career.

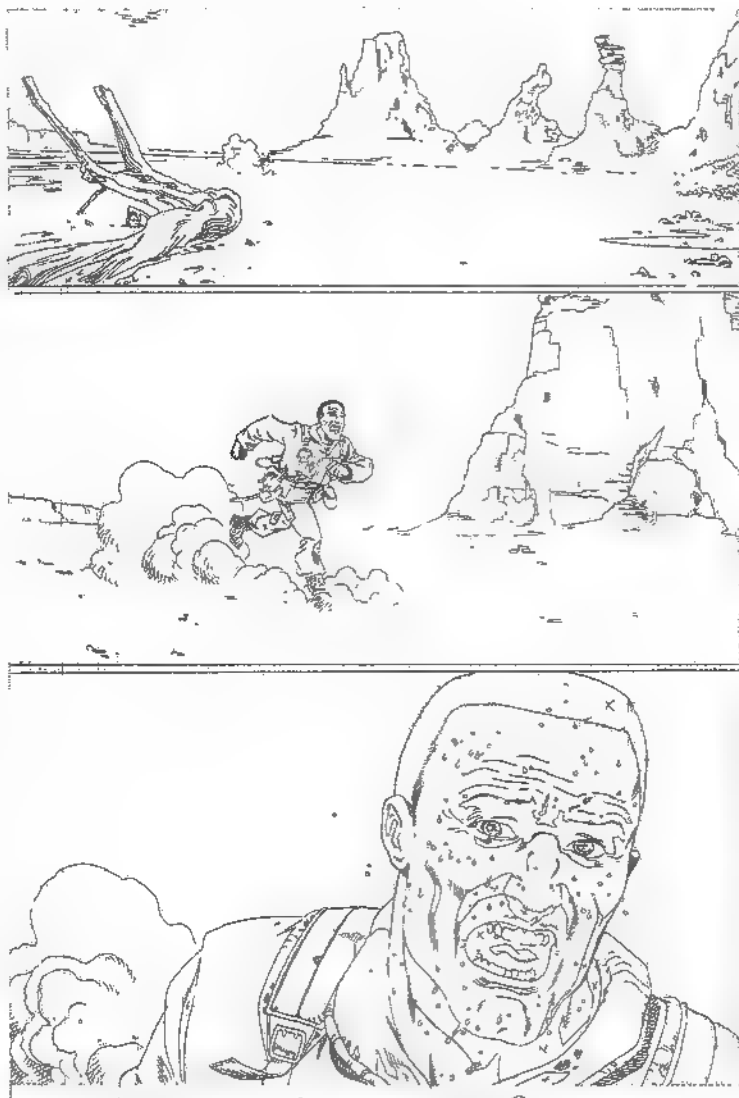
KJ: My first regular assignment happened with *Jungle Action* back in the early '70s. I don't have it in front of me but I think it was with the third issue that Marvel went with new material prior to that it was reprints of jungle characters and stories (it was actually *Jungle Action Featuring the Black Panther* by #3). I was working in the Marvel offices for Sol Brodsky applying zip-a-tone to the black-&-white reprints that Marvel was publishing. These were a series of books where Marvel inserted some of the worst of their 1940s and '50s material shot from unusually bad copies upon which I was to add some texture and tone. Focusing on such a narrow subject was good discipline for me. It added another layer to some theories about texture and shade, light and dark, foreground and background that I was picking up. It was miserable work but I must say I was happy. I was at the beginning of my exploration of the city and was about to make the move here so, to me, everyday was sunny.

During that time I met Rich Buckler who was also working in the same space where I was. I showed my stuff to everyone who was breathing at that time and Rich invited me to work on a project with him. I was more than eager to do so. That project turned out to be the *Black Panther* written by Don McGregor and penciled by Rich. It turned out we were a decent team and paired up later again on *Deathlok* (*Astonishing Tales*, I think). I got the surprise of my life on the third one I did. For some reason which escapes me at the moment, Rich was unable to do the next few, so Gil Kane penciled one or two. Gil was another of my strongest influences and to work with him so soon out of the gate was an absolute thrill, I must say. I can remember just looking at the pencils for days before I started.

I think I did more inking over Sal Buscema than I did his brother John. I worked with Sal for a long stretch on the original run of the *Defenders*. I was pretty much the regular guy on there so much so when the *Gil Kane Annual* was penciled it seemed like a natural thing to give to me (thankyouthankyouthankyou). I was roaming around after the *Defenders*. I inked George Pérez on *Logan's Run* and a few other things, *Howard the Duck*, of course, which I enjoyed a lot, over Gene Colan, Carmine Infantino, and Sal Buscema.

The first time I inked John Buscema I think was on a *Man-Thing Annual*, I think. I loved his stuff—still do. For me, inking John was like ice skating: Verrrrrry smooth. John has an extremely warm and sensuous line that undulates but doesn't break. I tend to be a bit angular so I thought I could bring something to the table. I don't think I hit it on the *Man-Thing*, but got closer when we paired to do a brief run of *Kull the Conqueror*, which I also colored.

Somewhere in that mix I became the regular inker on *Daredevil*, a character which I very much loved from issue #1. I inked an assortment of pencilers on that book and had a great time throughout. The mix of artists was fun to try and interpret and yet still make the characters consistent. I was told during this period to keep people looking the same. It was a bit tough because the styles were pretty disparate.



INDICIA HRETA

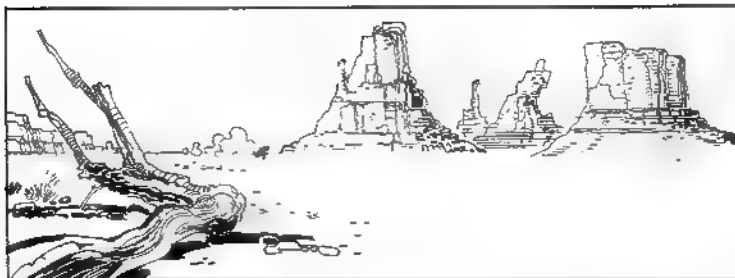
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Bob Brown, Gil Kane (a very decent run), Gene Colan, Carmine Infantino, Frank Miller were all different from each other. Carmine and Frank fell into the Sekowsky "designy" category, especially Carmine. Frank works more graphically now but you could see the beginnings of it on *Daredevil*. Carmine was highly stylized and very interesting to ink. Lots of angles and heavy line weight contrasting with thinner lines. Bob Brown worked a lot with the side of his pencil so there were huge masses of blacks with ambiguous edges I wasn't sure how to interpret. Was that a grey or not? Gil Kane's pencils were just the opposite: Little or no blacks at all. Any lighting or shadow you see on Kane's work is usually added by the inker. His work was so perfectly designed that it was often a risky venture to become too "creative" (I always had Wally Wood in mind when I inked Gil during those years). I had the pleasure of inking

Steve Dillon recently and tried to add blacks and really couldn't. It's fine just the way it is. And that is one of the secrets to that school of inking. Contrast. A heavy line doesn't really become heavy until a thin line is put somewhere that allows contrast. Once there are two lines of contrasting weights, the visual becomes more interesting by that simple act itself. With thought, weight and volume can be achieved and depth can be realized. The thin/heavy line school does not rely merely (though very effective) on composition to overcome the limitations of a two-dimensional piece of paper, it creates an illusion of space with ink.

DRAW! When you were going in and turning in jobs, were you getting any feedback from John Romita, the art director, or anyone at DC? Were you getting feedback from the pencilers? Were they asking to get you to ink them?

KJ: I did occasionally get feedback from John Romita Sr. (a real intelligent, sweet-hearted man). I would bring in stuff an editor wanted to check out before it went to press and get his take on things. One time specifically, I was inking a Bob Brown *Daredevil* where the splash featured Copperhead and some fencing in the background. I laid some zip-a-tone onto the background, which of course covered the



TOOL—TECHNIQUE

JANSON: With John McCrea's pencils, I tried to organize the backgrounds and textures (the dust being kicked up and the lines on the buttes in the distance). I added weight to the figure on Panel 2, and especially Panel 3. If you compare the pencils to the inks, it is a pretty good example of the difference line weights can make.



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fence which was rendered in a solid line. He says to me, "You know, this will create a *mouiré* pattern" (a series of harsh small shapes that might draw too much attention to itself). I had no idea what he was talking about and said, "Yeah, that's what I want." He looked at me the way I look at my students when you know you can't win the argument and just let me do it. He knew the best way to teach was to learn from your own mistakes.

People were asking to have me ink them, which I enjoyed a lot cause I got to work with a lot of people. Of course, there is a whole group of pencilers that would never ask me again.

DRAW: Were the various pencilers influencing you as you inked such a wide variety, in the '70s especially?

KJ: Everyone I inked influenced me. It was a conscious act on my part. From the very beginning I tried to learn as much as I could from the pencilers I worked with. I was looking to be influenced. I tried to be a sponge and let as much in as possible. Honestly I don't know if any of it did, I don't see it in my penciling.

DRAW: I loved your inking on Gil Kane, Infantino, and of course Frank Miller. You seemed to be one of a handful of inkers like Giordano, Palmer, Sinnott as well as Austin who really effected and left a mark on the pencilers you inked. Was this a conscious thing?

KJ: My ability to leave a mark on the pencils of an artist is a tough question for me to answer. People tell me this but I can't be subjective about it. It's just hard for me to see being that I am the one who is doing it. I think of myself as a fairly versatile inker. I have a couple of styles that I work in depending on the penciler. And I think inkers need to respect the pencils enough to let the penciler through. My inking philosophy is predicated on the simple question: "What works in these pencils and what doesn't?" If the penciler has incorrect anatomy I might try to help it along. If the composition or layout is crap then I might add some blacks to try and hide that. If the contrast is not clear I'll add a black or a shadow or a texture. The inker is allowed to make subtle changes to help the penciler achieve his goal. I always try to analyze the page and see what that goal might be. I'll be the first to tell you that I sometimes go too far. But let me tell you this. There were two decades where Marvel consistently handed me jobs where the editor would say "fix this up." I would get some god-awful work and be given *carte blanche*—do whatever you want. So I would basically redo them. There are not too many of those types of jobs anymore. Either through attrition or the economics of comics, the worst have been squeezed out (well almost, not quite). So the job requirements are changed. The current flavor is

"tracers." Most pencilers ask for that style of inking where nothing is added or subtracted. I can't trace, but I can hold back enough. Tracing is as much a bastardization of the form as re-doing the pencils. If the art is two people it needs to be the best of the two, not subjugated to the whim of one or the other.

DRAW: Then came *Dark Knight*, and that was certainly a milestone for everyone involved as well as the industry as a whole, and now Miller's coming back for Round 2. How did that seminal '80s work effect your approach to inking post-*Dark Knight*?



LEFT: Pencils by Jon McCrea from *Hulk Smash!*
ABOVE: Inks by Janson.

KJ: *Dark Knight* didn't really affect me artistically that much if at all. *Daredevil* was where I developed some chops. I took a big leap forward on that series. *Dark Knight* was a seminal event to me in the sense that it raised my profile within the industry quite a bit. I tried as much to stay out of the vortex. I saw to some

TOOLS—TECHNIQUE

JANSON: Note on this page how textures are used in a specific way: The footwear is inked with the same type of pen cross-hatching, but it's not used anywhere else. Note the "juicy" brushwork on the figure in the foreground on the right.

degree what it was doing to Frank and had no real desire to join in the madness. The book was becoming more and more a Frank Miller production, in the media especially, and they had no problem ignoring the inker, so that offered some protection. *Dark Knight* was too incoherent and erratic artistically for me to have any large input into it. Frank wound up re-inking a good chunk of #3, and I had no control over the coloring, unlike *Daredevil*, so I definitely felt a cog in the wheel rather than a partner. I think #2 was probably the best inking—I was proud of that one, especially the fight scene in the mud. Cool stuff.

DRAW: Were you more interested in penciling comics yourself after doing all this inking?

KJ: I was interested in penciling all my life. This was the way to lay down the strongest and most direct artistic communication. Inking was a way of making money for a year or two before I was good enough to be a penciler. I realized shortly after I started inking that I wasn't good enough to ink let alone pencil so I became more involved in the dissection of the inking craft. I enjoyed it too. But it became so involving and creatively satisfying that I continued with it. Whenever I've hit a creative wall, I add something else to my arsenal. After inking came an exploration of color. After color

came penciling and after that came writing. That's a list of skills that not too many people can match. It's also enough to keep me challenged and satisfied.

DRAW: I know there was a job several years back where Tom Palmer inked your pencils. How was that for a change?

KJ: I was lucky enough to get Tom Palmer to ink me on an early issue of *Wolverine* (maybe #8 or so). He did an amazing job and I was soooo happy that someone of Tom's caliber was inking my pencils. He'd been a pivotal influence on me and it was a fan geek's dream come true. I always tell him that we must work together again and he swears we will but we haven't found the right project. I want to do something with him where we trade off on coloring duties too, the way he and Neal did on *X-Men*. Another geek dream was realized when I inked Dick Giordano on the mini series *Gordon's Law* a few years back and he inked the covers over my pencils. Great fun and a very good job.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

DRAW! Now I'd like to turn the interview to the real meat and potatoes, and pry out all of your techniques and secrets. Can you give us a breakdown on your tools, nibs and brushes?

KJ: I use a #103 Hunt mapping point pen and a Raphael brush either #3 or #4. The 103s are pretty flexible and strong so they can take a beating. I can get a pretty fat line out of them if I need to. I use a Koh-I-Nor penholder that has a cork tip on it to hold the nib. Lately I've been using Rotring technical pens to do straight lines for the backgrounds and I like that a lot. And although my work is said to have a spontaneous feel to it, I often labor the line, going over it many times. I use Pelikan drawing ink A and Pelikan graphic white to make corrections. For stuff that needs re-inking I use Liquid Paper.



SUBTLY (ASTRANED) GON -

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TOOLS—TECHNIQUE

JANSON: My favorite pencil to ink is John Romita Jr. His style allows me to use a lot of bold, brassy brush lines contrasted with tight, clean pen lines. His work captures the volume and weight of shapes and I try to emphasize that.

On this page in panel 2, the brush lines are slightly different on the chain compared to the lines on Odin deliberately. Spatter in the background was done with ink on toothbrush and my thumb. Make sure you mask off areas you want to keep clean.



PREVIOUS PAGE: A chained but defiant Odin from *Thor*, penciled by John Romita Jr.
LEFT: The final inked page by Janson.

DRAWI: Sometimes it even looked like you used your fingerprints and split hair brushes and other utensils to ink with, add texture with. Have you used some unconventional tools to ink with?

KJ: I've used every conceivable trick I've learned and could think of over the past few years. Too many to list (hey—look for the Inking book in the Spring). Certainly thumbprints and split hair wherever I thought they could serve a function. I've experimented with zip-a-tone a lot, spatter, dry brush, even different types of material for different textures (old fluffy towels work well). My goal is to give certain areas or objects a specific identity with a texture, so I could use anything around me. I did some inking with a branch I found once. Hey—why not?

DRAWI: You seem to use such a variety of textures and employ both pen and brush weaving a lush, bold and textured ink canvas. Do you have a certain approach to inking a page or penciler?

KJ: I usually start with a background to get warmed up and do a few panels of those. Then move to figures and ink the damn thing. I'm very specific about what each penciler needs.

DRAWI: Do you do all the pen first, brush later, or do you work back and forth employing both as you go along?

KJ: I might do some thin pen lines with John Buscema and then go in with a brush to do the feathering and blacks. With someone like Mike Zeck, I ink the whole thing in pen and just fill in the blacks. With John Romita Jr. (a great penciler to ink) I tend toward brush but wind up doing a lot of pen to bring out some of the detail in his work. John is all about being in your face and power and such so I tend to augment that by using a bolder approach with a brush. He is also very good at design so I try to accent that by using thin/heavy lines. It's a very tightly thought out and specific decision with John Jr. I might feather a chest with a pen and then do the lat muscle with brush—it all depends what kind of line I want. You have to try and understand that in my head I have a catalog of lines and feathering that I have filed away from years of reading and doing comics. So I might want an Al Williamson pen feathering and contrast it with a Dick Giordano heavy brush lat. I operate a lot by instinct and often see what I'm doing after I've done it.

DRAWI: Do you study the work before you ink it? By this I mean John Romita Jr. is very bold and stylistic penciler compared to say John Buscema, who has such a wonderful classic sense of figure drawing with drapery and all kinds of places to explore texture and technique on backgrounds. Both are just fantastic and powerful pencilers—but different.

KJ: I try very much to strike the right balance with texture and black-&-white. I usually, at least at this point, don't have more than three things going on in a panel and sometimes a page. I'll use a black shape, a white shape, and one kind of texture. Two textures a panel is too much, causing a bit of visual overload. If I

can keep the texture the same throughout the whole page or even the whole scene, I go for that. I don't want to go overboard and distract from the story. There are scenes that allow the inker to go texture crazy—explosions or interiors or clothing or outdoors. There are moments in the story when the pacing slows down and I feel that visual candy is appropriate. It's like giving the reader something more to look at in what might be an uninteresting scene. But otherwise I intentionally try to stay out of the way.

DRAWI: Do you prefer more cartoony or abstract work, or more realistic to ink?

KJ: If I had to choose I guess I would pick the more cartoony, abstract work to ink, but it would be a tough choice. The abstract work allows me to be less realistic and impressionistic. I realize at this point in my development that comics isn't about realism. To try and imitate it is a dead end. There will be jobs that need to be approached realistically, but I'm taking about super-heroes and horror and sci fi: The classic comic genres. So the further I can get into that playground the closer I feel I am to taking advantage of the medium.

DRAWI: That is a very good point. It seems often that now realism is somehow looked at as being better than cartoony, or more abstract work. Do you have any thoughts on how to better utilize these strengths, and do you read or follow the work of current or past creators in the field that you think are exploring this? Do you think it can be pushed beyond a certain point in such a commercial field, where you always are fighting the clock?

KJ: This particular point of view (Reality vs.—for lack-of-a-better-name—Cartoony) has come to me really since the advent of my teaching career. In analyzing and dissecting comics for instance, I realized that part of the whole goal is to overcome the limitations of the medium and surpass them. For instance, comics are on paper which is two-dimensional. Artists need to create the illusion of three dimensions. How that is achieved brings us to techniques like foreshortening, for instance, and exaggeration. Neither of those fit comfortably within the context of “reality.” Comics need to be alive and the best ways to do that almost always involve going past reality. I find it incredibly ironic that my earliest penciling and inking was realistic to a fault and that now, when Marvel seems to be doing more reality influenced books, I have come to admire what they are not doing: Kirby for instance. People like Kirby were raised on reality but later turned to impressionism and exaggeration. You can easily track this by watching his backgrounds from the '40s to the '70s. The earlier work was precise and architecturally correct. In the later work he was interested in larger concepts and theories and he let his imagination run free. He exaggerated his earlier “realistic” information and built on that to use the mediums greatest limitations to his benefit. That's the reason why I think he was so great. He overcame the inherent problems of the medium itself.

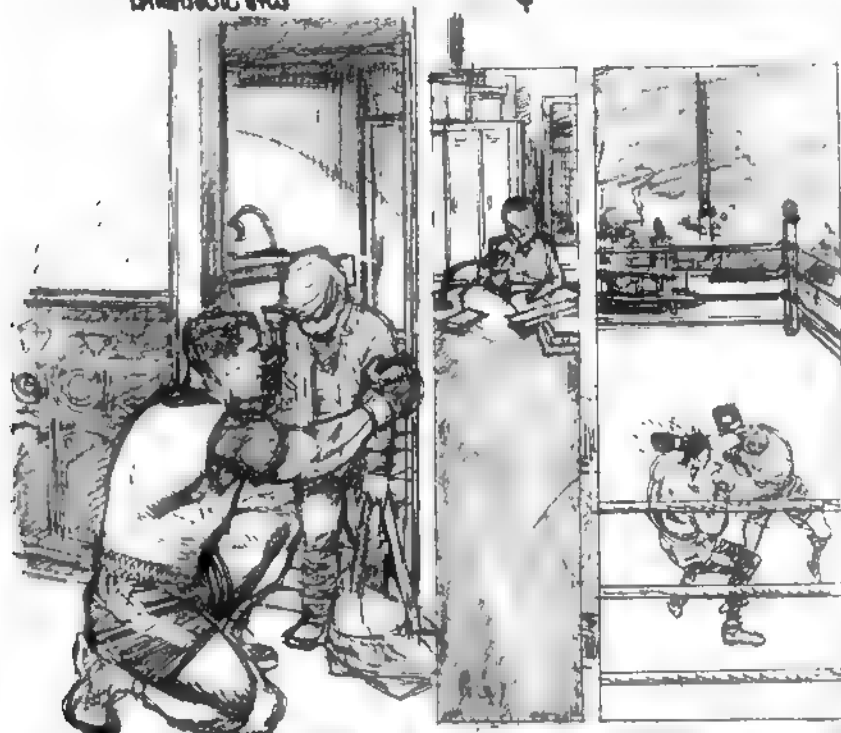
INKING DEMONSTRATION

STEP 1

On the following pages Janson takes us step-by-step through his creative process in inking a page. We start off with Step 1: WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

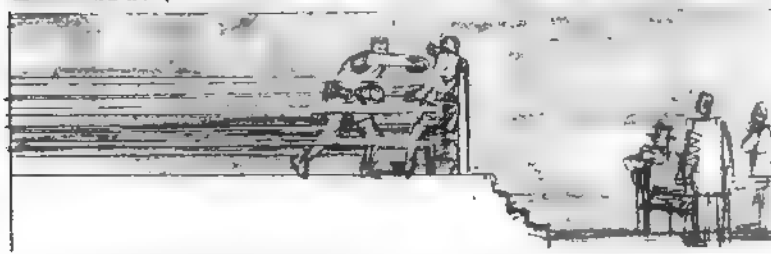
DAREDEVIL #143

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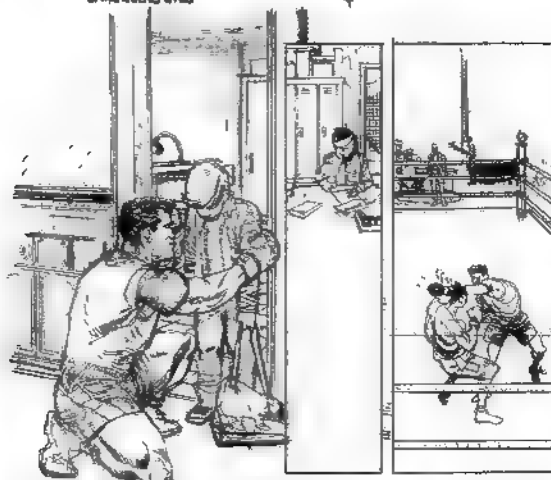
STEP 1: PROBLEMS

JANSON: This is a page from an unpublished story I wrote and penciled a few years back for Marvel's short-lived black-&-white series titled *Shadows + Light*. I think the book was canceled as I was finishing the story.

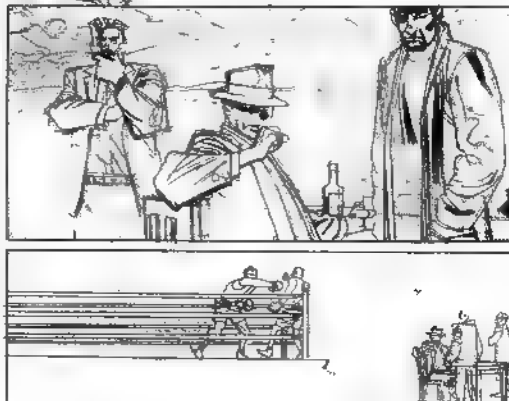


DAREDEVIL #264

4



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STEP 3

JANSON: At this point I filled in the large black areas and started inking the figures with a #4 brush. I always go back and tighten up with pen after I lay in the blacks. Some inkers put blacks last—I find that it looks too “tight” when I do that. I prefer some spontaneity. At this point, I left some areas that require different tools or mindset.

STEP 2: STRAIGHT LINES

JANSON: I usually do borders, straight ruled lines, and any template shapes (circles, curves, etc.) first. It keeps the blacks within the line and helps the page later on when it needs to be cleaned. The only problem I addressed here was the ropes of the ring in panel 3. It didn't look correct perspective-wise, so I dropped the top one. The ink lines on figures seem to be doodles for me—I felt like I was just drawing with ink. This was all done with pen, by the way.



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STEP 5

JANSON: The last stage is working with white (Pelican graphic White). I use a trimmed down No. 3 brush and clean the borders first. Then I go in and adjust the art (like the smoke). I do a lot of work in white. It's not economical time-wise, but I like the effects I can get.



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STEP 4

JANSON: I then go back and finish up the pen/brush work. I make sure the outline of figures are clear, heavy up some lines, fill in small areas of black. The detail of the wall, I decided to do in pen (panel 1), and the smoke (except for the cigar smoke which was done in pen) in panel 4, which I do in dry brush: Dip the brush in ink, rub brush on scrap of paper until almost dry, then proceed to ink.



DRAW!: You've often done finishes over breakdowns. How do you compare that to inking full pencils, and do you prefer either one?

KJ: Finishes over breakdowns are my favorite jobs.

DRAW!: Do you feel you can be bolder and take more chances with technique?

KJ: I sometimes ask if there's a real crappy job I could go hog wild on, but fortunately there are less and less of them. Finishes give me the opportunity to pull the job together while still projecting my vision onto it. Sort of the equivalent of having the responsibility for all the textures and line work and blacks but none of the storytelling.

DRAW!: How many pages do you work on at one time? It appears that because your work has such vitality and vigor to it, that you must be pretty fast. Not to paint yourself in a corner with any editors who may be reading this, but generally

how many pages a day do you do? Do you have certain goals when doing a monthly book? I know from being an inker myself from time to time, you are the last guy in the chain and get squeezed to pick up the slack if the penciler, writer or letterer, etc., may be behind. How do you deal with this and the "burn-out" it can cause by playing Mighty Mouse and saving the day month after month?

KJ: I can do three pages a day, but prefer to stay at two. The third page does suffer a bit. The best arrangement for me is to ink a page and then do some penciling, or vice versa. But that doesn't happen too often. Usually the books that I ink I need to turn around pretty fast. If I do a monthly, I don't think it's unreasonable to spend two weeks on it. The problem is the schedule of the other people on the book. The writer and penciler and colorist all have their own schedules and I don't think I've ever seen a monthly where everything works perfectly. When you see me off the monthly merry-go-round (like now), then you will know how I deal with the burn-out: I leave and

ABOVE: Janson's inking over editor Mike Manley's pencils from *Ninjack*. © 2004 Acclaim
BELOW: A cover from Janson's dynamic run on *The Punisher*. © 2004 Marvel Characters, Inc.





the inker. Do you feel concerned at all about this? It seems to me that it's one thing to clean up a pencil line digitally to reproduce better, but what you do is so much more interpretive. There is no Klaus Janson Photoshop filter or plug-in.

KJ: The advent of technology and the notion of replacing inkers is hilarious to me. If this were to happen I can tell you comics would start to decline in quality and character even more quickly than they already are. I had some trepidation about this subject but it was completely erased when I saw *Final Fantasy* this past Summer. I certainly thought it was an accomplishment for CGI fans, but it exposed the failings of technology also. To do a movie without actors is to remove any sense of spontaneity or improvisation that occurs between actors while filming. *Final Fantasy* was an iceberg of Titanic proportions: Cold, distant, inaccessible and characterless. I feel very much the same about the technology of printing the pencils. Most of these ideas spring from the minds of people who really don't understand what a comic is or does. They think that they will save money by cutting out one of the building blocks. An inker gets paid for two of his attributes: The skill within his hand to execute the work and the brains between his ears. It is often more important what's in the head, and no one is going to replace that. I'm not worried about that at all. I welcome the competition.

ABOVE: Janson's inking over Manley on a Darkhawk pin-up from the *Darkhawk Annual*.
BELOW: Janson great textural inking over John Byrne's breakdowns from *Wolverine*.



scrounge for one-shots and mini-series or develop projects on my own. It's usually a time of less money so then I go back to the monthly. The last monthly I did was *Thor* with John Romita for about two years and after that was *Defenders* with Erik Larsen (great fun to ink) for three months.

DRAW: How do you deal with the fact that to a great degree the classic tools of the trade—the inks, pens nibs, paper and brushes—keep slowly declining in quality and are becoming harder to find, especially in quantity? Does this effect your work? You feel you have to fight with your tools to get the same type of effect?

KJ: I agree that the quality of equipment is continuing to become more and more crappy. The only way I know how to deal with it is pay more money for the stuff I use and buy in bulk. I still have about 100 sheets of zip-a-tone that I bought at the beginning of the '90s when they were just phasing out. Brushes I usually buy in 72 bunches, nibs by the gross. Halfway through I order some more cause it will take months to get anything anyway. It's crazy. I become frustrated by the short life of nibs and brushes so try to get the best I can.

DRAW: Are you embracing the digital revolution at all? Experimenting with digital tablets and Photoshop? There has been a lot of scare talk and rumors especially on the Internet and various message boards about the companies doing away with


I haven't embraced the computer revolution in terms of my own artwork as of yet. I'm looking for opportunities to do so. You might know that I tend to be organic as an inker and a penciler so I'm a bit reluctant to introduce something that is so opposite my goal. It'll happen eventually.

DRAW! Excellent points. I understand you were also teaching classes at SVA in NY as well. Can you explain a little about that?

KJ: I've been teaching at the School of Visual Arts since the early '90s so I think I have at least 10 years experience in that field. At the time I was getting more and more cheesed off at the low standard by which media critics (*Wizard* is especially guilty of this) were judging the art form. It seemed there was no knowledge behind any of their opinions. I also wanted to get involved with giving something back to a community which had brought me so much joy. Somehow I came up with the idea of teaching. Frankly I never thought that any school would be open to this but SVA was more than eager to hire me. They had a cartooning department and I fit into that category. My class is built around the basics of good storytelling and then splits off into tangents (inking, writing, story structure, coloring, etc.). The theories behind storytelling are really enough to fill two semesters, but I find that it's better to cater to the MTV generation by throwing a greater variety of topics at them. It's been a great experience for me, I really like the challenge of it. I get back as much as I give and enjoy seeing what is on the minds of the students. I can easily slip into a political or philosophical rant, tie it into storytelling and use what's floating in the air to make a point. I know that when I start in a few weeks, the first class will revolve around the characteristics of an interesting story. Why for instance was the Princess Diana story more interesting than the Mother Teresa story? Why are we so obsessed with Gary Condit and Chandra Levy? The deconstruction and examination of those events will lead us into the basics of a compelling story. Most of what I try to cover is in my new book: *How to Draw Comics* published through DC Comics and Watson Guptil which will be released in the Fall. I have another book coming out in the Spring called *How to Ink Comics*, or something like that. Look for them in your favorite bookstore.

DRAW! And what is the attitude of the new students coming in now? I know a few years ago all the questions I ever got asked at shows had to do with royalties. Has this changed? And finally, do you recommend to our younger readers as well as your students any specific books or artists to study?

KJ: The attitude of students? That's a long answer. I agree that a lot of young talent is focused on the money. There is a change happening, though. There have been more students who sincerely want to express themselves at any cost. It's almost like I see one more than last year. I find it very reassuring. The most prevalent attitude I find in the class I teach is the "Why are they printing such garbage when I am so much better and can't get any work?" This is the most difficult hurdle to overcome. There is some truth to the statement of course but not very often and not very much. The first goal of the class (and the thread run-

ning throughout the semesters) is to impress upon the students how difficult this choice of careers is. Comics storytelling is enormously complicated and difficult. To do it adequately requires many years of study and experience. I cannot emphasize this enough. To become an artist on the level of Kirby, Kane, Kurtzman, Kubert, is possible, but not without an incredible amount of work and dedication. Success is a combination of talent and personality. Think of how many comic book artists there are in the USA. A thousand? Five thousand? Try a couple hundred. And out of those now living, how many are good? Fifty? Try maybe twenty. Twenty people in this whole country. Think about it and ask yourself why. 

Make sure to get a copy of Klaus's *How to Draw Comics*, published by DC Comics, available this Fall.

An example of Janson's work from *Critical Mass* for Marvel Comics.



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The Best of DRAW!, Volume One compiles material from the first two sold-out issues of *DRAW!*, the professional "How-To" magazine on comics and cartooning! Featured here are tutorials by, and interviews with, the top artists in the comics industry: DAVE GIBBONS (layout and drawing on the computer), BRET BLEVINS (drawing lovely women, painting from life, and creating figures that "feel"), JERRY ORDWAY (detailing his working methods), KLAUS JANSON and RICARDO VILLAGRAN (inking techniques), GENNDY TARTAKOVSKY (on animation and *Samurai Jack*), STEVE CONLEY (creating web comics and cartoons), PHIL HESTER and ANDE PARKS (penciling and inking), and more! Each artist presents their work step-by-step, so you can see it progress to finished form, learning valuable tips and tricks along the way. See how the pros do it, and learn from the best, as editor MIKE MANLEY assembles this wealth of information for both beginning and experienced artists!



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